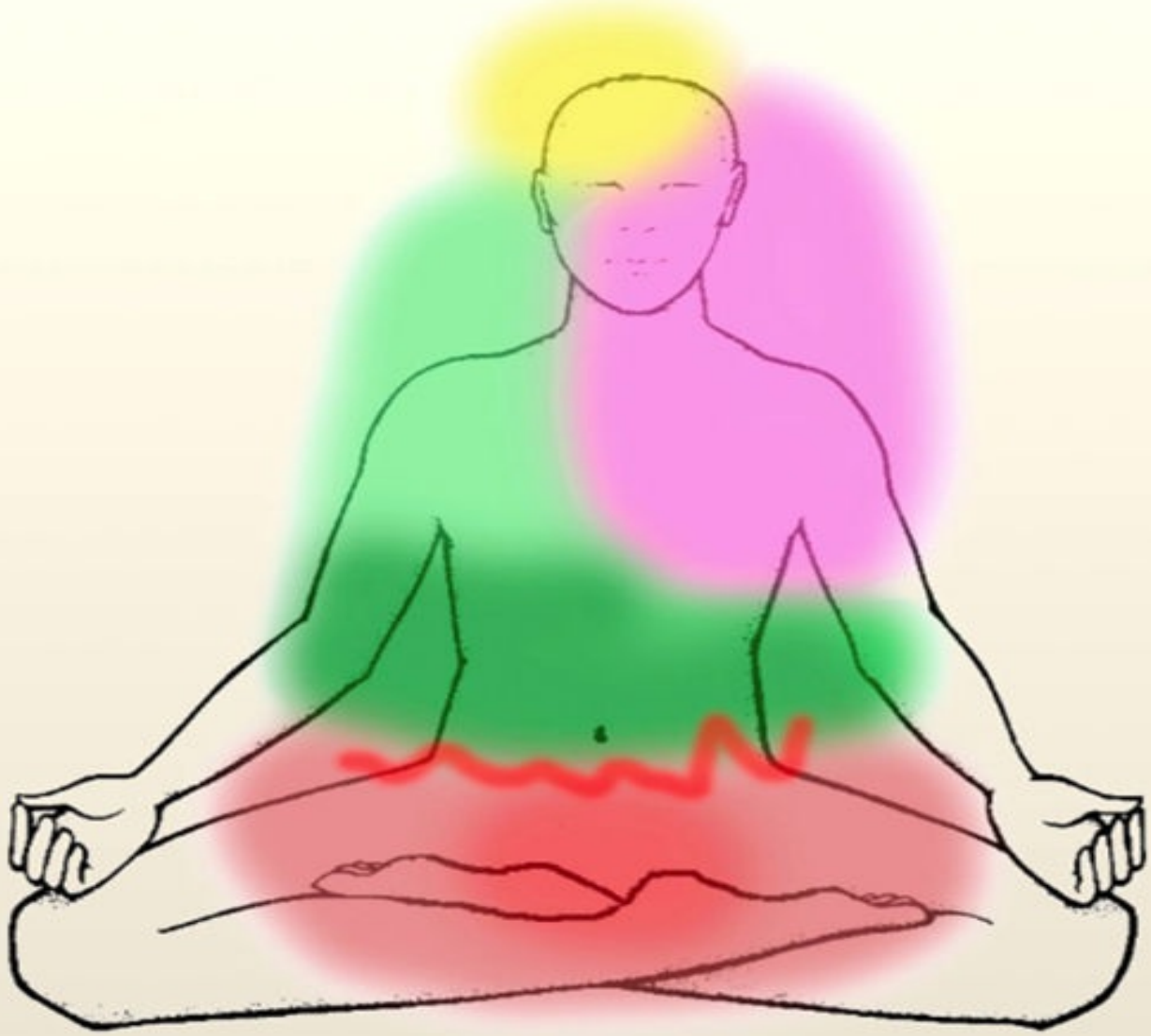
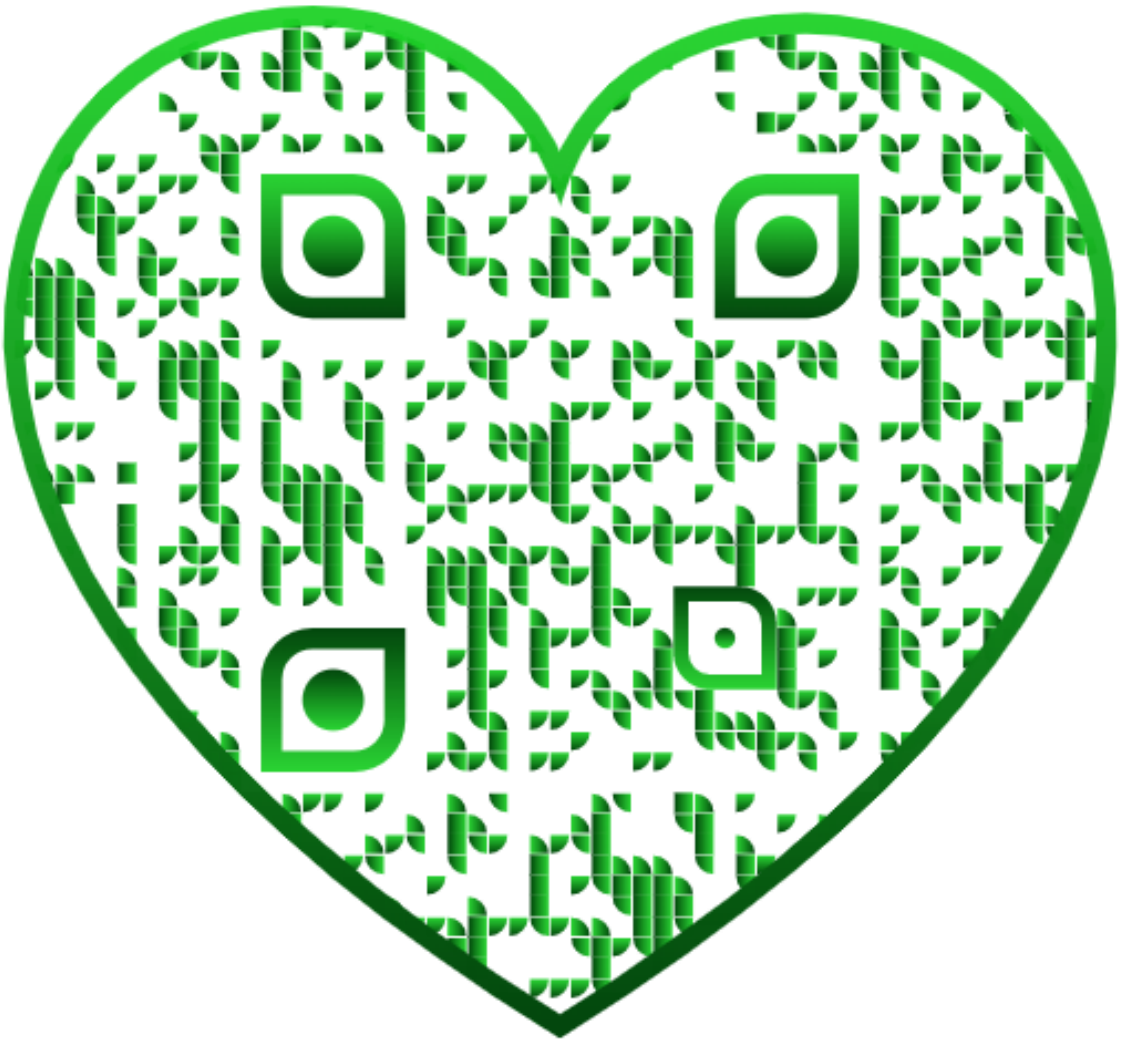
The Subtle Bodies and the Aura

A Short and Illustrated Introduction



Jan Esmann



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Introduction

There are five bodies worth mentioning:
1. The physical body
2. The vital body (the etheric double)
3. The emotional (astral) body
4. The mental body
5. The causal body.

Some speak of seven bodies dividing the mental body into:
1. A lower mind (“manas” or “manomaya kosha”)
2. A discerning level (“vijnanamaya kosha”)
3. A level of higher cognition (“buddhi”).

For our introductory book five will suffice.

All physical beings have all the subtle bodies, but in some they are more developed than in others. Plants have physical bodies and vital/etherical bodies fully incarnated. But the astral, mental and causal are highly undeveloped and not ready to incarnate. Animals have developed and incarnated their astral body, but only rarely do they begin to incarnate the mental body. We know some pets and domesticated animals are quite clever. They are examples of animals beginning to develop and integrate the mental body. Humans have fully integrated the mental body, but it is far from developed in all. The causal body usually hangs in another dimension a meter or two above the head and people are quite unaware of it. Professional meditators experience it and integrate it. The enlightened being has a fully incarnated causal body. The causal body is also called the bliss body (“anandamaya kosha”). With enlightenment one even transcends the causal body.

Good actions have good effects on the higher bodies while bad or evil actions have a detrimental effect. Fortunately, good actions make a much stronger impression than bad ones. This means that it is much easier to progress spiritually than regress. You would have to be consistently evil to regress. The lower feelings and thoughts cannot reach the causal body and make an imprint on it, while good vibrations can. Hence a man will progress, maybe slowly, but always to some degree. He will nevertheless still have to face the karmic

consequences of his bad actions in this or some future life.

The vital body (The etheric double)

Most people can see the vital body. Hold your hand against a dark background in a somewhat subdued light. Shake the hand lightly so as not to focus on it. You should see something resembling the following illustration.

There is a slight band, about 5 mm, surrounding the hand where there is no visible aura. Then a grayish fog-like aura is visible of the size of 5-10 cm depending on the level of vitality. Where there are injuries to the fingers, like after a minor operation, there will be an empty band radiating out from the injured area. Actually, the vital body has the same shape and size as the physical body, what we see is an emanation from it.

The vital body is not a separate body like the other subtle bodies, but is a part of the physical body, being its subtlest element. Hence it is also called the etheric double. It administers the flow of vital force (prāna) to the various organs through its numerous energy channels (nādis). Traditional Indian scriptures say there are 72,000 such nādis, but I doubt anyone has actually sat down and counted the exact number. These are probably the same as the meridians known from acupuncture.

All living organisms exchange etherical matter. There is thus an exchange of vitality going on subconsciously. People with pets are often attached to the exchange of etherical matter between themselves and their pet. They believe they love the pet, but largely they love the exchange of vitality with the animal. One can feel this exchange if one is in close proximity to an unpleasant and unhealthy person. Similarly, one can feel it when in the company of someone radiating vitality and joy. You just feel either drained or uplifted. Much of what is love between individuals and the pleasure of being in each other's proximity or cuddling is due to an exchange of etheric matter.

Mostly this exchange is unconscious, but it can be used consciously in the healing arts. If someone has a weak organ or some other disease, one with a strong vital body can direct a flow of vitality ("prāna") from himself to that area in the other person. This kind of healing does of course not heal the organ, but invigorates the vital body of the patient so it can better help heal the diseased organ itself. The problem with healing is that the healer gives away some of his own vitality. He or she may even pick up the malfunctional etherical matter of the patient. Thus, a healer may eventually suffer the very illness he or she is healing.

Plants have vital bodies also. Anyone with some experience with plants will know the invigorating influence they can have. It is well known that if you direct negativity towards a plant, i.e. harm its vital body, it will not thrive, while loving care has the opposite effect.
The vital body is strengthened through wholesome, organically grown food with strong vital bodies. Modern agriculture does not support a good vital body in plant food. Nor do animal farms with no care for the animals' wellbeing produce vitality in the animals. Animal products for food should come from free range animals brought up on grass and wholesome food.

There are chakras, or energy centers, in the vital body, just as in all the subtle bodies. They are located in the same places in all the bodies. In the vital body they are like command centers directing the flow of prāna to the rest of the vital body. There are numerous chakras, but seven are the most important ones. In the etherical body they are generally colorless.

7. The brain and the top of the head

6. Between the eyebrows
5. At the throat
4. In the middle of the chest
3. Midway between the breast bone and the navel
2. Midway between the navel and the pubic bone
1. The perineum

The theosophists ignore this second chakra and use the spleen chakra instead. That is a gross error since the rising of prāna kundalinī is inside the spine, not in the spleen.

There are pink chakras in the palms of the hands. They can be used for healing. There is an eighth chakra about 30-40 cm above the head called Brahmara. It is very potent and one should only meditate on it under guidance and at an advanced level of one's sadhana (spiritual practice). You need to open and activate the seven major chakras first.

The etherical body of a living person can influence other people positively or negatively, like all the other bodies can. Certain people can vampirize on other people's etherical body and so to speak steal their vital force. In such people's company you feel drained and exhausted. Similarly, one may out of love for someone in distress channel vital force to his or her etherical body invigorating the person. This happens constantly between lovers.

Being in the company of good friends is also a source of positive etherical exchange. But as soon as you feel someone wants something from you it is probably a one sided exchanged and best left avoided.

If you feel love for someone and it is unremitted, it usually means they do not feel invigorated by you like you do by them. It can also be an astral phenomenon. But physical love tends to depend on etherical exchange. Astral resonance comes later. The the couple may discover that despite the good physical match they are terrible emotional matches and the relationship breaks apart. Some people jump into relationships based on the physical and etherical alone and then hope the best. Sometimes they are lucky, often not.

Etherical love is the most common "love" known to man and animals. When

two living bodies lie together there is an intense exchange of etherial matter (prāna). This is invigorating and stimulating to both parties if they are in sympathy or “love” as they would say. They will feel dependent on this exchange and miss each other when they don’t get it for a while. It is the same if it is two humans or a human and an animal. Contemporary so-called Tantric practitioners often do nothing spiritual except invigorate the etherical body. Regarding enlightenment it is useless. It can have as great a therapeutic value as good sex, where etherical matter is exchanged, but that is it. If you are single and sexually frustrated, you can go to a “Tantric” and get healed and have your body and genitals massaged lovingly. Just don’t think of it as anything but sophisticated prostitution.

Most people need this etherical exchange in sex in order to feel good. At some high level of progress you draw the etheric substance from the surroundings and do not need physical intimacy anymore. This does not mean that just because you have repressed your sexual urges, you are at this stage of etheric interaction with the surroundings. It just means you are depleting yourself of a pleasure of life and will not feel as invigorated as others do. So, celibacy is not a good thing unless it happens spontaneously and you have no urge anymore. Not even wet dreams.

Upon death the vital body stays with the physical body and slowly dissipates into the surroundings. Usually it will float over the grave for some days. This is usually what is considered a ghost. It is quite harmless since it has no intelligence or intent. Eventually it will dissipate and vanish. But it is one of the reasons there is such a spooky mood at graveyards. The deceased person can even remain in the etherical body for a few hours or days. This does not happen if the body is cremated.

If the vital body is strongly infused with energy from the astral body, and if there is strong attachment to the physical level, then the astral body and etherical body may stay connected after the physical death and form a “regular” ghost. Such a ghost can haunt places, either malevolently or benevolently or simply neutrally for a long time. The length of time depending on how long it takes the astral body to break the connection with the etherical. It can take hours or years depending on the level of attachment the individual had to the physical world. He or she is using the etherical body in place of a physical.

Often such poor souls do not realize they are dead. I know of one woman who was an ardent meditator and died. She haunts her ashram as a ghost believing she is in a higher state of consciousness. She is just attached to her ashram life and won't let go.

After physical death there will be a period of astral life. But more about that later. We are concerned with cases where a dead person is so attached to the physical world he or she won't let go of the etherical body and lives as a ghost. Such ghosts are usually attached to sensual experiences like sex, drinking, smoking or hard drugs. They will try to suck etherical matter from people engaged in such acts or even try to possess them.

Etherical selfprotecton

One can occasionally protect oneself from etheric vampires by forming an etherical shell. One visualizes the etherical body as impenetrable and solid. But it should not be permanent since just as it keeps bad etherical energy out, it also keeps it in and furthermore hinders a healthy etheric exchange. One can also visualize oneself inside an impenetrable egg made of etherical matter. But with this there is a greater risk of using astral matter and creating an astral shell, which is not what we want. The energy vampire can still penetrate a purely astral shell with his or her etherical body, though they are kept out astrally and can't feed on one's emotions. Some create a shell at night to protect the body while sleeping, but again one should be sure it is made of etherical stuff not astral, otherwise one will not be able to interact with the astral world during sleep, caught in a shell of one's own making.

Etherical shells are useful if you go to a party where people get drunk and unpleasant and you for some reason can't leave, or if you have to be in a group of people where some vampire types are. It could for example be a peaceful political demonstration, but the aggression of the particular point of view will invade one etherically and can be harmful. Even going shopping, one might encounter vampires and could then protect oneself, or sitting in a bus, train or plane one might happen to sit next to a vampire.

Etherical matter is not just simple vital force (prāna). It can take form of

thoughts or feelings that can invade and influence others to think or feel the same way. Purely etherical forms may be quite vitalized and live for considerable time. We then call them etherical elementals. They can also be combined with astral emanations and we then have a desire elemental. It floats around and is attracted to people with the same desires and attaches itself to them making them indulge in their desire in order to feed on it. There are many such desire elementals floating around and one can register their influence when one suddenly has entirely foreign thoughts or feelings. One should try not to identify with them, but let them pass through so to speak. Their energy will soon wear out if one does not identify with them. Forming an etherical shell before going to sleep is a good habit to protect the sleeping body from being invaded by elementals.

Etherical entities

There exists etherical beings that live without a physical body, but do have astral, mental and causal bodies. Angels being the most highly evolved of these, while at the lower end we have mythic beings like fairies. These are good natured and like to help nature and humans in distress. Then there are dark entities that vampirize on living beings, whether human or animal. They are attracted to dirt and foul smells. Thus, one can clean a room of their presence with incense and ethereal oils. The good-natured etherical beings are attracted to clean and nice smelling environments and one can invite them in with incense and pleasant aromas. They do not respond to crystals as in crystal therapy. But gemstones and certain other materials may have a beneficial effect on the etherical body if worn as necklaces or other jewelry. The etheric vampires are nasty creatures. They suck the life out of ill people and animals. Thus, in hospitals we find both good etherical beings and evil vampires.

Energizing objects

You can energize objects either in general or with specific intentions. Jewels worn every day will become energized with that person’s special vibration. Some materials hold certain vibrations and energies better than others. Thus, yogis usually wear rudraksha beads because they tend to hold shakti (spiritual energy) more than other objects. You can vitalize an object for a specific

purpose for a special person. You then hand it over, or even send it by mail, to the person it is intended for. When the person wears the object, he or she will pick up the energy and vibration.

There are two steps to create such an object. First, if necessary, you should purify it of its present etheric energy. You hold the object in your hands and sense its vibration, then infuse it with the opposite vibration and then neutralize what remains. You then let the surrounding neutral etherical matter infuse the objects. Second you create a special intent for the object and infuse the object with it. The whole operation can be done in 15 minutes. Five minutes to purify and ten to infuse.

Gemstones are good at holding energy, whether good or bad. In themselves they do not have any special energy, at least not strong enough to be generally felt. But if you meditate upon them regularly, they can become powerful sources of etherical energy. The seeds of the rudraksha are especially good for meditation if worn as a necklace. Necklaces of lapis lazuli are good for devotion. Just to mention a few examples.

Not only objects, like icons or crucifixes, will be energized by the devotion poured into them. Entire cathedrals, churches or ashrams will have a devotional space if they have been used for worship and prayer for hundreds if not thousands of years.

A cook impresses his or her vital energy vibration upon the food by the cook. One should be careful not to eat food prepared by gross or vile people. The more one handles the food while preparing it, the more it is infused, like bread and other baked foods.

The etherical vibration of the produce is of course very strong. Animals who live their life in fear imprint their meat with terrible etherical vibrations that drag the person who eats it down. If one wants to eat meat or egg it should be organic and from free range animals that had a happy life.

Not just are the objects mentioned above infused with etherical matter, but also with astral and mental. Very few can make a causal imprint on an object. But if you are enlightened it is possible. You can only imprint as far as you have

evolved yourself.

The Astral Body

The so-called “astral” body has its name due to its luminescent quality. But the mental and causal bodies are also luminescent. Since we call those bodies by their proper functions, we ought to call the astral body the emotional body. But tradition has taken root.

The astral body permeates the physical and has much the same form as the physical. But it radiates out beyond the physical as what can be seen as an aura.

The astral body, unlike the etherical, lives independently of the physical body. Out-of-body experiences are when the astral body temporarily leaves the physical and floats a meter or so above it. Advanced souls can do astral journeys, usually during sleep, where they visit their students and guide them. These students can live close by or in faraway countries, it does not matter once the teacher-student connection is established. This connection is an astral bond – as well as a mental and causal, and is does not break despite the distance. The astral bond with the physical body only breaks at death. Then the soul continues its spiritual journey on the astral level. The teacher-student bond however, does not break from life to life.

There are many levels of astral worlds. Currently man in general is at the second or third lowest. The lowest two being hells. There is no such thing as eternal hell, by the way. Next higher is "heaven" in whatever form one imagines it. Egoic impulses and want of emotional satisfaction characterizes all the astral levels. Each higher level is characterized by less and less egoic urges. Yet pure selfish emotions still characterize the highest astral level, but there they are not evil in any way. Some say there are seven levels in the astral world and as we will see later, I tend to agree. But I do not think you are stuck in one during your astral life. You can progress to the next higher if you develop enough purity, love and devotion.

The desire elemental

Unlike the vital body, the astral body does not give off and exchange particles. But its vibration can be felt in other astral bodies as a kind of resonance. Love between individuals largely depends on sympathetic resonance. For this to

happen there has to be some similarities between the auras. A bright and pure aura would not resonate sympathetically with a dark and selfish one, for example, but it will still feel its influence.

Strong emotion can create a desire elemental. As the name implies it is an entity made up of strong desires and wishes. It is elemental in that it has no intelligence or will of its own, it is just made to carry out the desire of the creator. This can be good, evil or neutral. Evil and vengeful people can create elementals to harm a living person. Likewise, good people can send helpful elementals to help the living. Most of the elementals, though, are just an empty shell of some desire attracted to people of similar desire.

Physically living people create desire elementals also. People who have a strong desire to smoke, for example, create a desire elemental that keeps them smoking. Likewise, with drinking. Watching sports creates a strong desire elemental to keep on watching and for their favored team to win.

An interesting thing is that there are created extremely strong elementals of religious figures. There is thus a super strong Jesus elemental that responds to people’s prayers. It has been built by all the love and devotion poured into it for 2000 years. It is made up of love and compassion and responds to similar emotions and emanates similar qualities into the devotee. The same with Buddha, Krishna and so on.

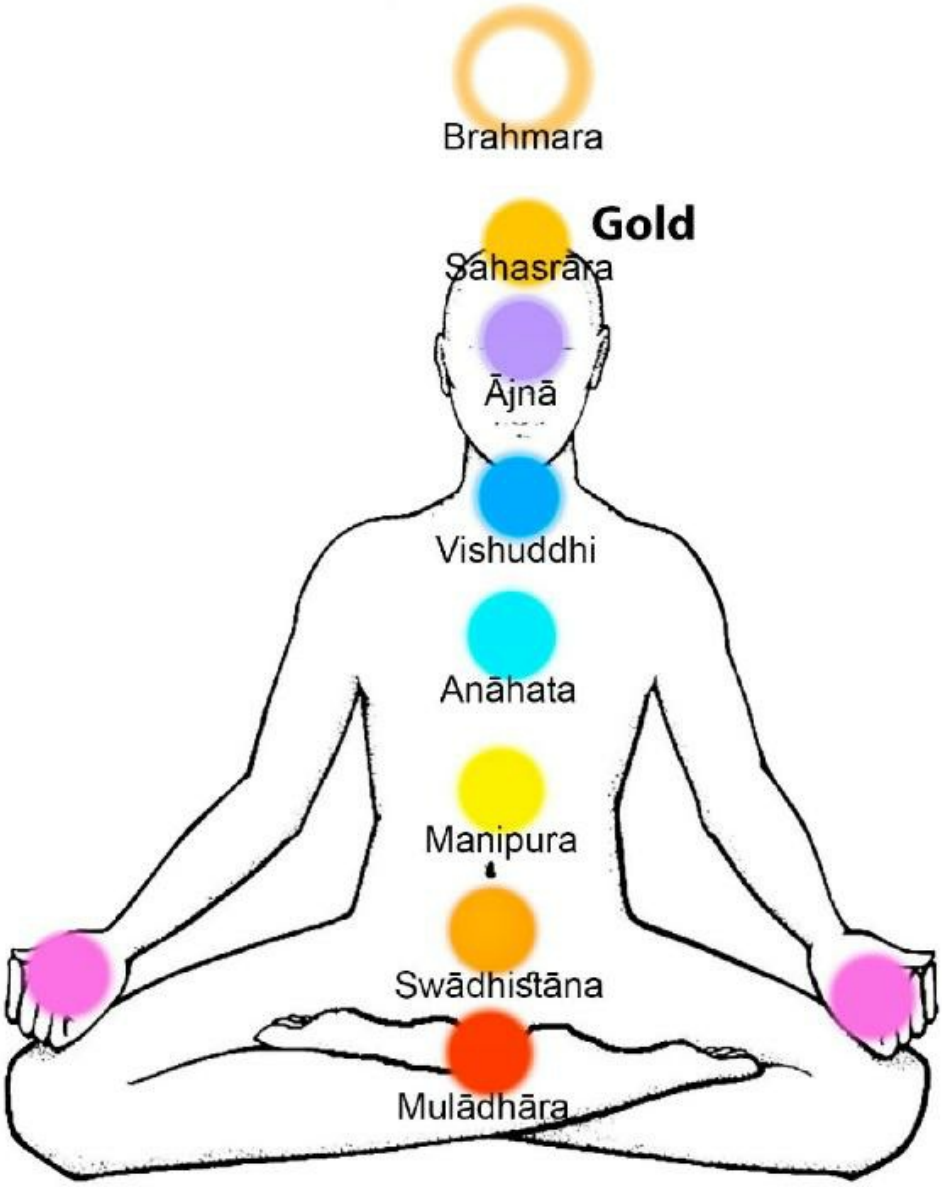
The chakras

We mentioned the chakras under the vital body. It is now time to show them in color, since the colors begin to appear in the astral dimension. The chakra above the head is Brahmara and it is only developed in highly advanced students. It should not be tampered with before it makes itself known. The pink chakras in the hands show healing chakras. They are not part of the main chakra system.

Note the heart chakra is cyan or light blue-green, not pure green such as the new agers want you to believe.

The chakras exist in all the bodies and are connecting points between them. The function as centers controlling the flow of etherical, astral, mental and causal matter.

There are many chakras, but the seven ones shown in the body are the most important. To mention a few others there is a chakra in the navel called “nabhi” chakra. One on the palate called “lalana” and one in the forehead called “guru chakra”. Certain yogic schools use these chakras. In our system of shaktipāt siddha yoga there is not much point in developing them. Brahmara being the only exception as it naturally unfolds at a point in our progress. Once the seven major chakras are opened and strong it is time to meditate on brahmara, but not before. If you do, it may throw you off balance and make you lose your grounding.


Brahmara
Gold
Sahasrāra
Ājnā
Vishuddhi
Anāhata
Manipura
Swādhisṭāna
Mulādhāra

On clairvoyance

As mentioned, the chakras are connecting points between the bodies. Through them information, emotions, and so on flow from one body to another. The reason not everyone is clairvoyant is twofold. First of all, there is a built-in "filter" in the chakra that does not let that kind of information through. Secondly, people are generally not evolved enough to see the subtle realms. Why not? Why this protection? Because not everything in the astral world is nice. Removing the filter from a chakra opens it up to a floodgate of information and/or visions that can be most depressing and frightening.

Clairvoyance is actually a very low psychic ability that is not to be sought after or hunted. For example, the ability to see other people's past lives is associated with the manipūra (solar plexus) chakra. When you get that siddhi (super ability) information about people's past lives just flood into your consciousness. It comes through manipūra when you are talking with them, and it is most annoying. Sure, you can impress some by telling them about their past lives, but you can also scare them away from you. You have to be sensitive and evolved enough to know what to tell to whom depending on what they can handle and actually need to know.

Toxins and drugs damage the chakras. Anything that messes with the mind potentially damages and hardens the chakra. You can figure out a list for yourself, but getting drunk and smoking pot or hash are definitely bad. So is ayahuasca, san Pedro, peyote and thorn apple, just to mention some of today's common bad things. Les toxic are tobacco and caffeine, but overdosed they do their damage. The parameter always being the more it messes with the mind, the worse. The opening of a chakra by use of drugs is usually temporary as long as the drug lasts, then it has the reverse effect and blocks the chakra.

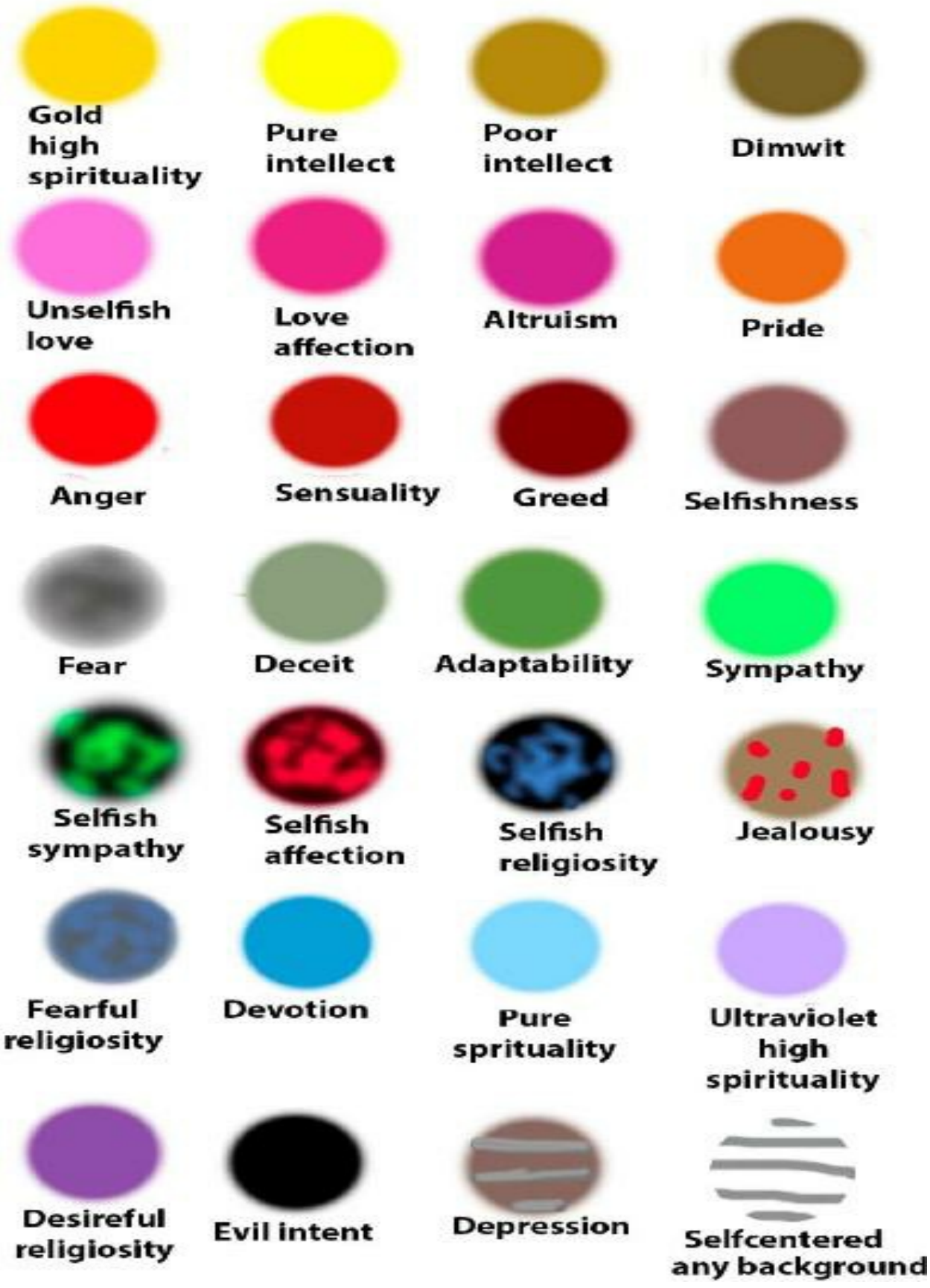
Just as toxins may open the chakra temporarily, they may harden it and make it more impenetrable for higher inspirations. Pot and hash seem especially good at that, which explains the dumbing down you often find when young people smoke a lot. When the chakra hardens, less of the higher inspiration can come through. The individual then becomes more gross, egocentric and un-empathic.

This happens to habitual users of all the drugs mentioned above. The result is that they spiritually progress slower than they otherwise would. Despite whatever they may experience during the intoxication.

People are not clairvoyant as a blessing, more as a curse. The things you see astrally are often far from nice, if not downright demonic. People are currently better off not being able to see and experience these things and energies. But it is good to read and learn about them. Experiencing the astral world is not just a matter of being able to coolly observe. You become extremely empathic and sense/feel the energies as much, if not more, than you see the colors. Half the population have quite ugly auras and energies. Imagine walking consciously in that negative soup all day!

In the following we will try to illustrate and explain the meaning of the colors.

Auracolors and their meaning


Gold high spirituality
Pure intellect
Poor intellect
Dimwit
Unselfish love
Love affection
Altruism
Pride
Anger
Sensuality
Greed
Selfishness
Fear
Deceit
Adaptability
Sympathy
Selfish sympathy
Selfish affection
Selfish religiosity
Jealousy
Fearful religiosity
Devotion
Pure sprituality
Ultraviolet high spirituality
Desireful religiosity
Evil intent
Depression
Selfcentered any background

Since the astral colors are not within a spectrum the eyes can perceive, some comments to the above chart may be useful.

Black

Egocentric anger and malice. The individual has no means of accomplishing his or her will except through evil deeds. There is no creative intelligence at all.

Brown

Depression and self-centeredness, Very low spiritual advancement. Life for these individuals is centered on gratifying their senses and they have no inkling of the higher principles in man.

Brown-grey

Egocentric and selfish. Today a most common color. It indicates lust mixed with ego which equals gross self-satisfactory desires. They may feel satisfied in life if they get what they want, but do not know real happiness.

Brown-red

This mixture of malice and ego signifies evil intent. The subject is scheming and planning solely for his or her own gain.

Brown-green

Alas, usually this indicates “love” but it is nothing but selfish lust for adoring company. It is most common but has nothing to do with real love. These individuals only want the satisfaction of being in the company they for some reason desire on a basic level.

Red on black

The individual has some sense of responsibility for his or her fate but still blames, even hates, everybody else for their own fate in life. In general: anger.

Grey

These individuals are sad if not deeply depressed. If a general color it certainly indicates depression but if arranged as horizontal bands around an clear aura it indicates selfishness. And consider this: in deep depression the individual is focused solely upon himself: hence the entire aura becomes greyish with bands of pure grey around it.

Greyish green

Selfishness through deceit and cunning

Greyish red

This usually indicates fear, but as a permanent color it indicates an individual who is afraid of losing his or her possessions. There is some element of greed in it, but it is more a matter of strong obsession with what is already acquired. They are usually scared of death because it means losing their possessions.

Blood red, dark

Strong desire for sensual pleasure. Sensuality and lust. These individuals only want what they desire and have no sense of respect for others. They are, so to speak, in love with themselves.

Crimson

Self-love. But also a sprouting love for other individuals that is not entirely selfish - though mostly it is selfish.

Pink

Unselfish love. Usually it is mixed with a darker selfish red, but some do show the pure pink of unselfish love. Sometimes there is a band of pure pink underlined by a band of selfish love. We see this in many healers. They should of course do their best to refine the dark egoic love into pure unselfish love.

Orange

Pride and self-centeredness. The more it turns towards pink the more unselfish until it turns to altruism. The more it turns towards blood red the more selfish and prideful the individual will be.

Lilac

Pure love for humanity and fellow men. It is pure love with an element of spiritual devotion in it.

Yellow

From dark and impure to pure primrose we have various levels of intellectual development. The muddiest being stupid and selfish, the purest being aimed at pure philosophy for no selfish reasons.

The Theosophists mistake gold for a higher octave of yellow, but that is wrong. It signifies an entirely different quality of the soul, namely spiritual advancement.

Gold

Varying in its level of intensity it signifies varying degrees of spiritual advancement. In self-realized individuals you see this pure gold halo around the head. In less realized it is muddy gold, but still quite distinct from dirty yellow.

Golden or Silver Stars

When dispersed all over the aura this indicates high spirituality.

Green, muddy and greyish

Deceit. The individual uses social skills to get his ways and is untrustworthy.

Green, dark

Unselfishness. Ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Green, bright as a spring leaf

Vitality. Unselfishness. Sympathy for fellow men.

Green, brighter than a spring leaf

Sympathy for fellow men and everything living.

Green, pale blueish

Sympathy and social adaptability. Social resourcefulness. Kindness.

Blue, dark

Religiosity and devotion. The brighter and purer the blue, the purer the devotion. If mixed with black it is fearful religiosity.

Blue, light

Devotion to the divine or a noble ideal. When tinted a bit purple it indicates affection combined with devotion.

Lilac, luminous

High spirituality and aspirations. Sincere devotion to the divine. Often seen with sparkling gold or silver stars.

Ultra-violet

High spirituality. Could also indicate psychic faculties like clairvoyance and healing.

Infra-red

Psychic faculties used for selfish purposes.

Organization

The spiritual colors tend to gather at the top of the aura, while the selfish and sensual ones gather at the bottom.

The shape of the aura is interesting also. Undeveloped individuals tend to have it large at the bottom and small at the top. Highly developed people have it the other way: large at the top and small at the bottom.

One should understand that any depiction of an aura is a snapshot of colors in fluid motion. There is some stability, like yellow always gathering around the head, for example. And the colors come in layers; thus, a pale blue may cover a yellow and give the impression of green. Also, for example, a large area of fine pink may have some darker red above it giving the impression the individuals love is less pure than it really is.

It is possible to have conflicting emotions at the same time. The more developed types may be full of love for a person while momentarily feeling anger at him or her without losing the love. Fortunately, the higher vibrations tend to last longer than the lower ones. And they are the only ones that can make an imprint on the causal body.

Healthy auras seem to have a stable form and pulsate slightly as if waves went through them. The advanced individual has bright and luminous colors. The lower dark colors are pale and with less force. The upper part shows the yellow of intellect, under which there is a band of blue devotion. Under this, in the chest area, we find the pink of unselfishness. And below that the apple green of harmony and adaptability. The pink tends to gather on the heart side of the body, while the green on the other.

Very lowly evolved beings have irregular auras with aggressive protrusions from it. These protrusions suddenly grab out seemingly randomly. They are usually blackish or muddy and dark grey in color. Or, which do more harm, they are scarlet red and grab at other people damaging their auras. Their auras have no particular form indicating a lack of spiritual stability. The overall impression is dark, confused and uncontrolled.

The mental and causal auras

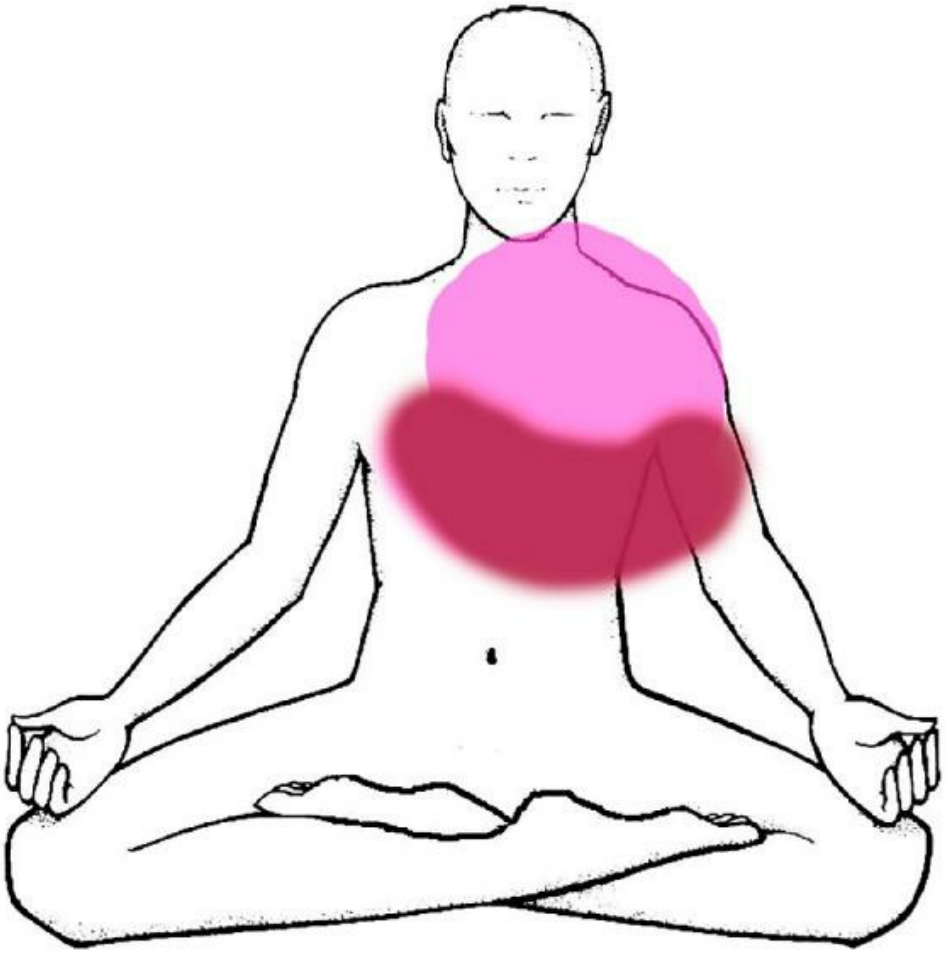
The subtler the body, the less of the gross colors and qualities are present. Instead there will be simply nothing or at best a dull white. Only the highest qualities can make an imprint on the subtler bodies. Thank god for that, for it means that we, no matter what, progress from every little bit of good we do from life to life. Even those who have led a life so vile, they had to stay in hell for a long time. Yet, old habits die hard and the evil person will probably continue doing evil in his next life, though he or she will be born with a bit more conscience. Eventually, after several thousands of years, these vile individuals might end up as saints renouncing all the evil they know so well.

As the individual evolves, the mental body and the astral body begin to resemble each other. In the beginning the lower astral forces do not make an impression on the mental body. But as man progresses, the astral body becomes more and more a reflection of the mental body and vice versa.

Eventually, the causal body picks up the higher vibrations of the astral and mental bodies and becomes colored in a similar way. At this point the causal body begins to incarnate, which is a rare phenomenon today. Once the causal body incarnates fully you have the enlightened being, the adept, or whatever you want to call him. The lower bodies then reflect the colors of the causal body.

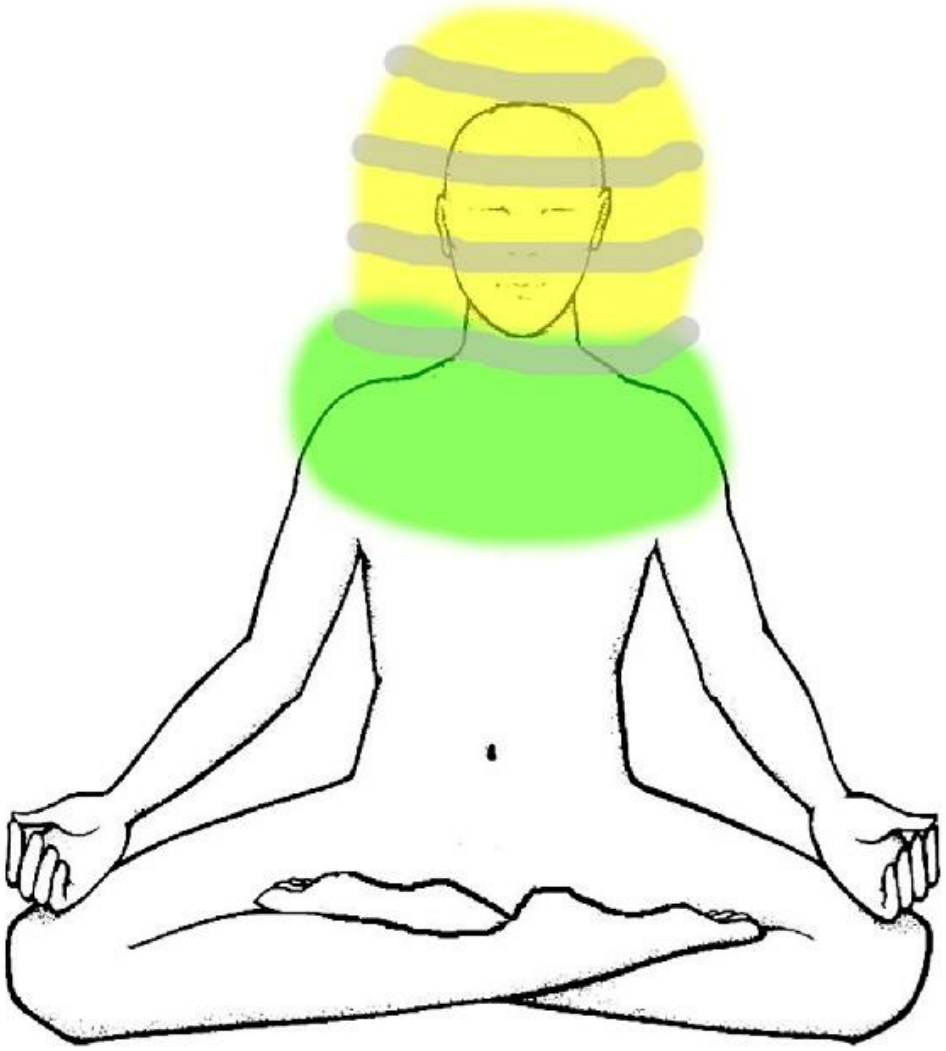
Auras

In the following there are a number of aura depictions. They appear in no particular order. Appended are interpretations of their meaning.



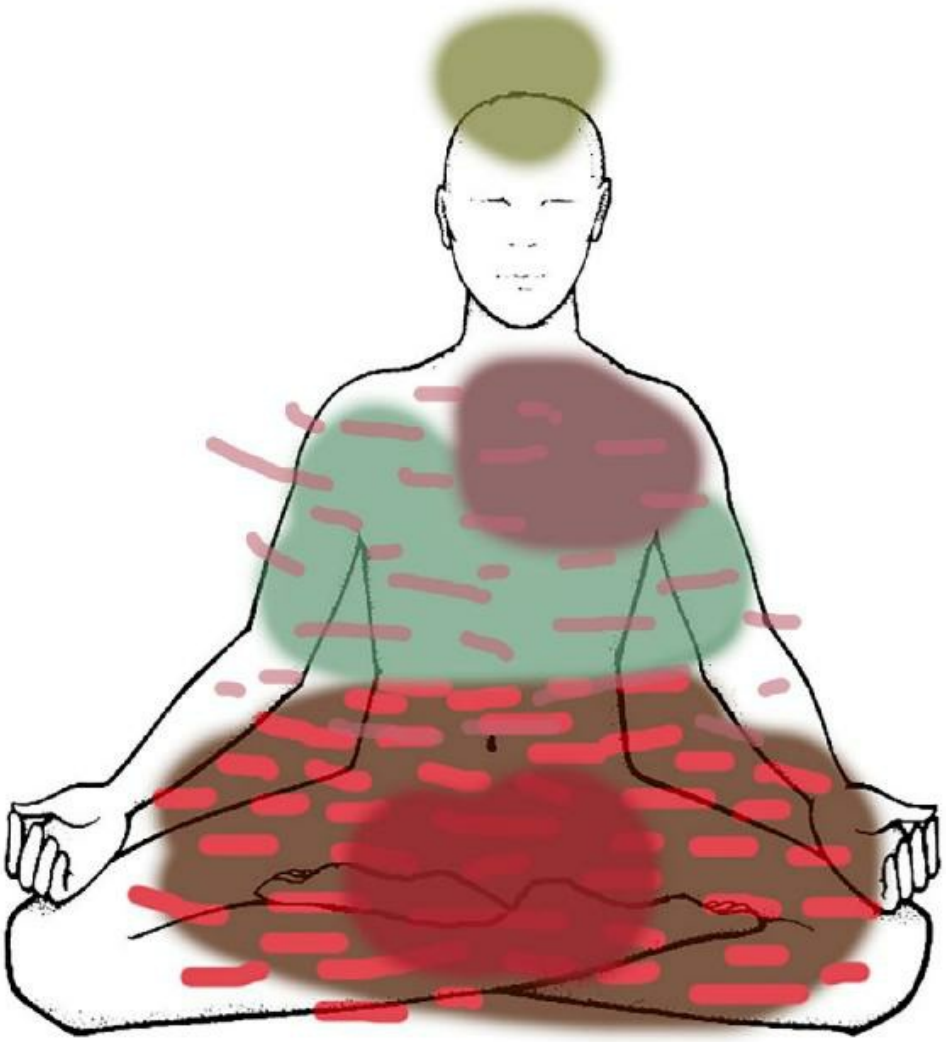
This individual had a lot of unselfish love but also displayed selfish love which the individual had to overcome. He was a natural healer pouring forth his unselfish love and I suggested he kept on with that while transmuting selfish love to unselfish love. There was a certain amount of pride in his unselfish love, which showed up as a muddy red field below the unselfish love of the pure pink of selfless love.

This individual is very interested in spirituality but it has an egoic or selfish motivation. She expected something in return for her devotion. Like some grace or blessing. It is a very common aura amongst so called spiritual people. Sadly, it is egocentric and not devotional. It has to be transmuted into the pure blue of unselfish devotion.

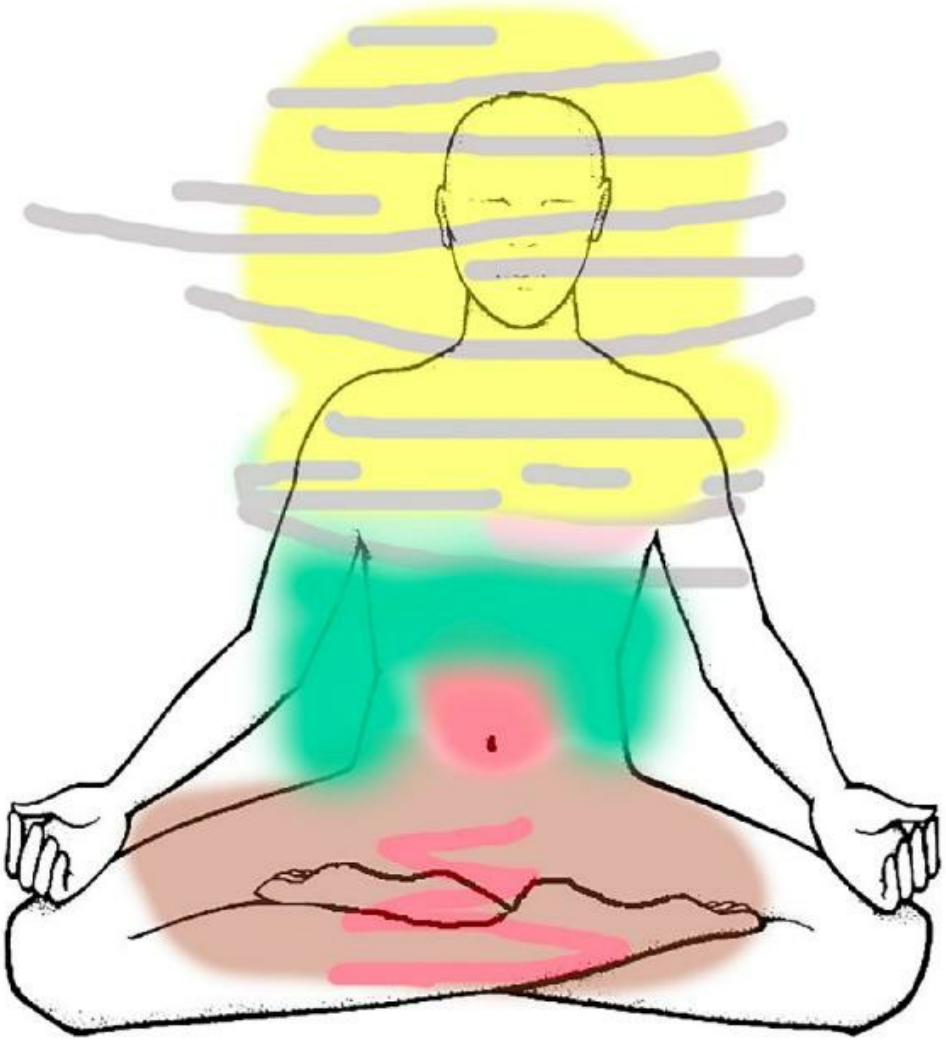


This is a fairly developed individual with a clever mind and kind nature and ability to socialize, but the grey bands around the head indicate the person is self-centered. The individual would join a social gathering and immediately start talking about herself and take the stage completely.

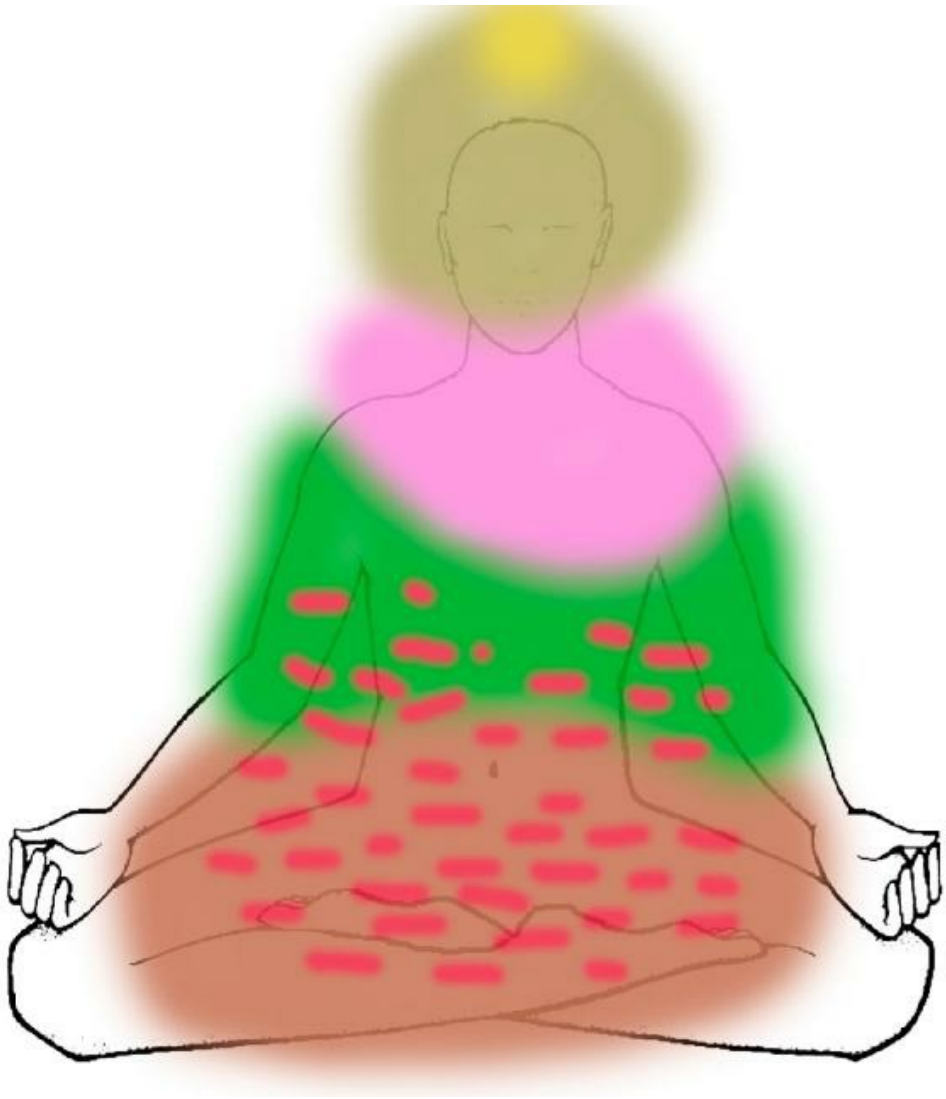
This is the aura of a nice person in love. The pink of unselfish love has completely overtaken then upper faculties and there is not much left of clear thinking. The green band of harmony has become a muddy color of jealousy which is particularly clear from the red dashes found in it. The dull red-brown on the lower part shows his or her interest is in sex rather than spiritual companionship. This is enforced by the messy and confused sexuality shown by the crimson flakes at the genitals. The shape of the aura, with the strong focus it the bottom, shows that what is really going on, despite the unselfish feelings, is totally selfish.



This is the aura of a so-called Tantric student in the modern sexual term of its use, though it has nothing to do with real Tantra. She showed up at my meditation group intrigued by my use of the word Tantra. There is very little intellect and not much unselfish love, though some love is present. There is much, though impure, kindness for fellow men and an urge for harmony seen in the dirty green. In the slightly more advanced person we find nice areas of pale pink indicating budding true unselfish love. The overpowering impression is sexual desire, but it is not refined as is seen from the dirty brown. The glowing red at the genitals shows a strong and purer sexuality in the form of sensuality. The flashes of red indicate sexual desire of an egocentric type. The sexual magnetism of a person with such an aura is very strong.

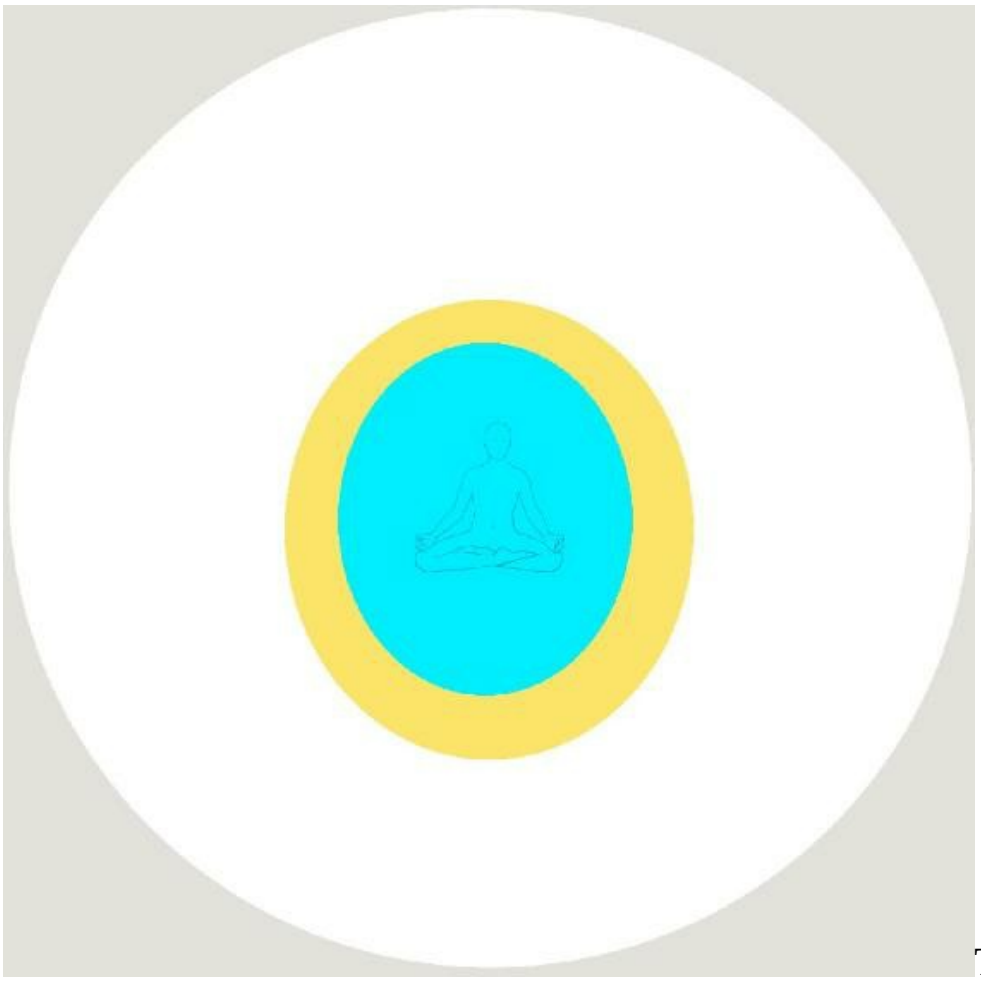


This is the aura of an intellectual academic. The large, clear yellow indicates a strong intellect, but the grey band around it indicates a lack of ability to see beyond his or her own ideas. The emotions and sense of mutual harmony are undeveloped, though not entirely lacking, or of a muddy character. They are pure and genuine but have little importance in the person’s life, which is controlled by the intellect. The red at solar plexus indicates an egocentric will to dominate others with his or her ideas and opinions. Though there is also a great amount of adaptability, necessary to understand and accept others views and studies. Sexually there is disharmony and lack of love and surrender to the partner. It is more a function of self-gratification and not loving devotion to a partner.



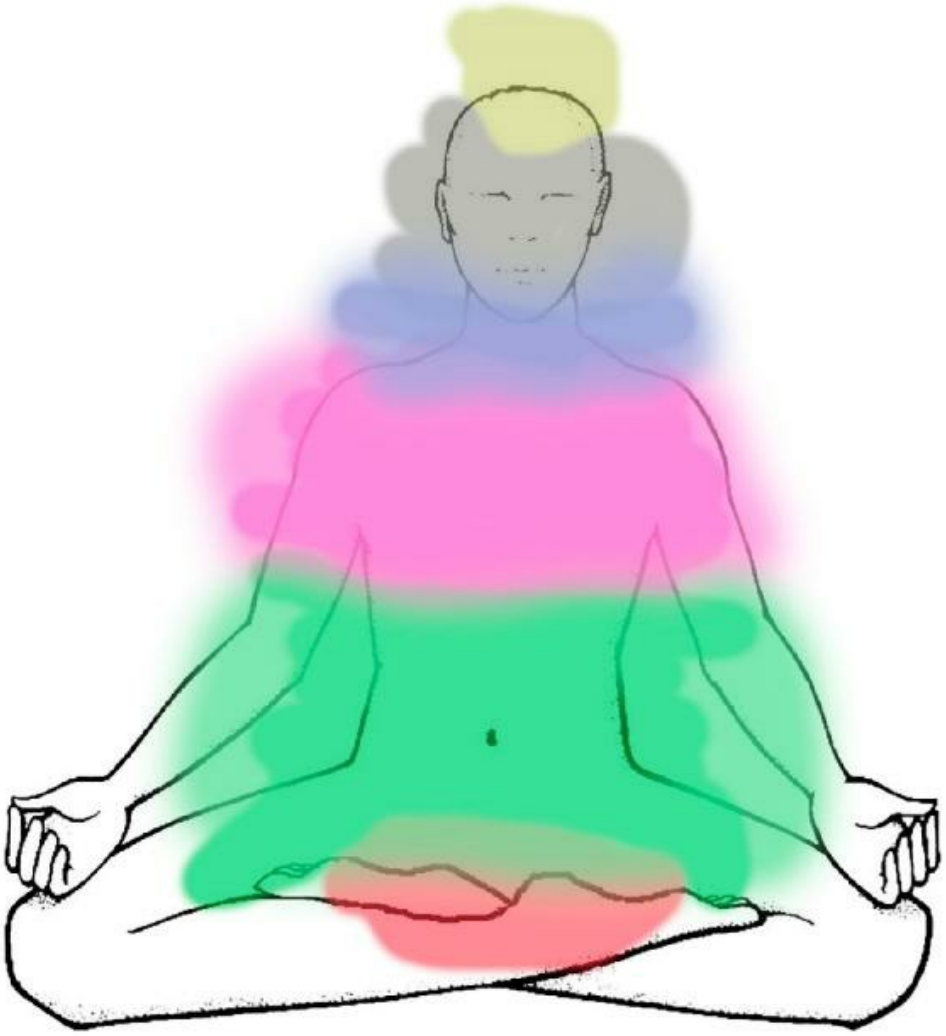
This is the aura of a neo-Tantric teacher of the sexual order. The colors are much brighter than in his students and there is much affection and sympathy. Indicating a genuine care for his or her students. But as with all sexual neo-Tantrics there is an over focus on sex and sensuality. We see the sensuality even permeate the affectionate green, indicating the highest affection for them is expressed through sensuality. Some intellectuality has begun to develop, unlike in the average sexual neo-Tantric student. We note there is no devotion to God but only to sensual intimacy.

This aura belongs to a highly developed individual. The golden aura around the head indicates a high spirituality and you probably have to be self-realized to have that. The pink suggests unselfish love and the green an ability to be in harmonious relationships with others and make peace where there is strife. The blue indicates strong devotion, but the person has not yet merged with it.

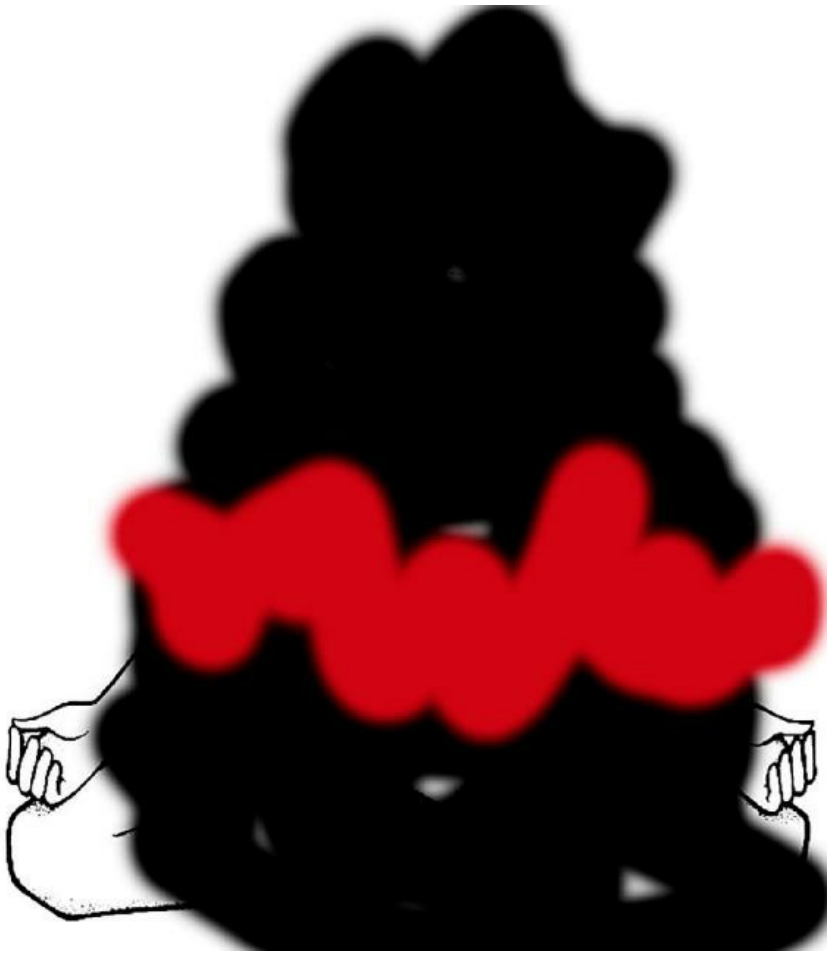


This aura belongs to a highly enlightened person. Outside the gold there is a huge field of mother of pearl which cannot be illustrated. In this case it was 100 meters in radius. The blue indicates the person is completely taken over by devotion to the divine, while the golden shell indicates the person is connected with the divine and to some degree has merged with god.

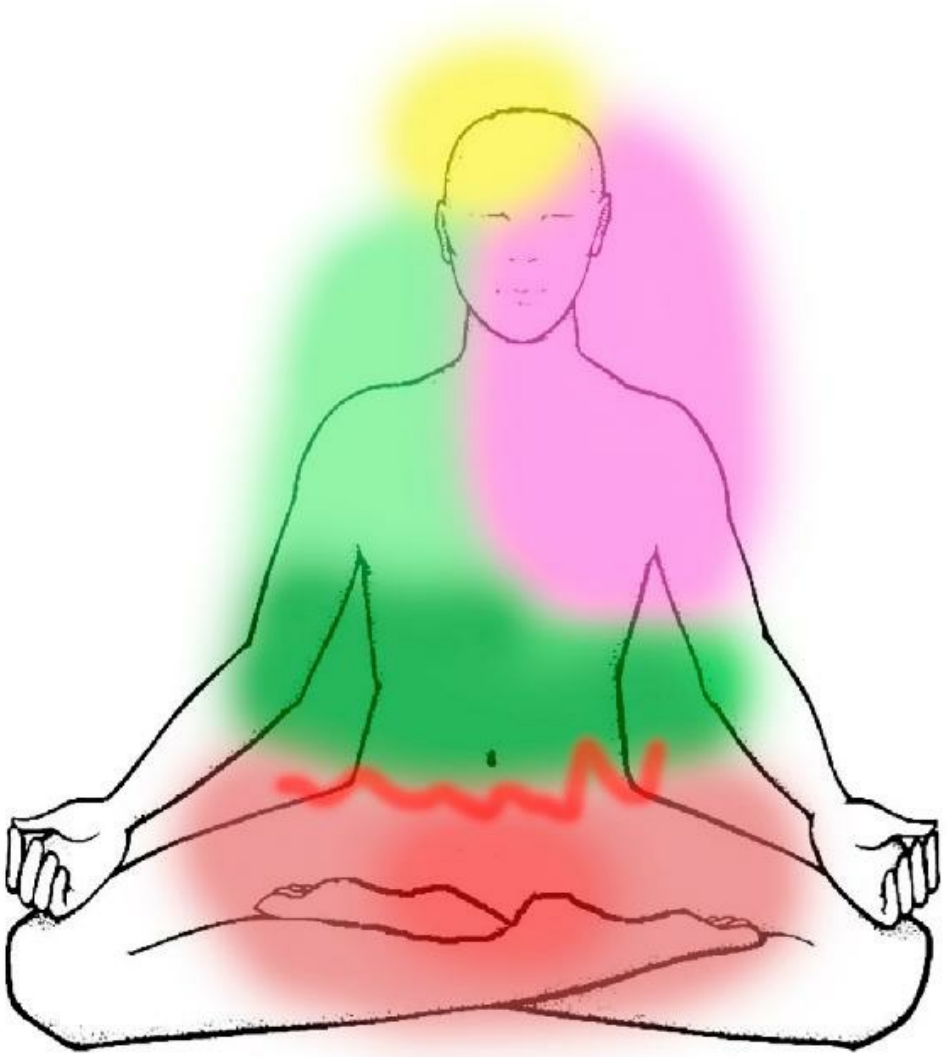
This aura belongs to a habitual hashish smoker. He had smoked every day, several times daily, for six months. The aura is surrounded and permeated by ugly grey clouds. The colors of the aura may or may not be pure, but they are weak and dim. In this case they are fairly pure, but one often sees strong red at the genitals indicating strong lust. Or a strong muddy red at the solar plexus indicating desire and addiction. Intellect is usually muddy and dysfunction.



This signifies a very sweet and kind person, but of low intellect. Sexuality is mainly in the service of loving someone else rather than pure self-gratification. The budding blue signifies a hint of spirituality and devotion to a noble ideal. People with this kind of highly social but budding spirituality and low intellect usually find together in religious sects like Anthroposophy or Scientology. They want someone, Rudolph Steiner or Ron Hubbard or whomsoever, to tell them what to do and think and feel about everything. They also need the cults strong social bonding. This aura actually belongs to a devout Anthroposophist who is a eurythmics instructor. This individual’s aura was very difficult to pin down as it was in such a strong state of agitation or motion. Probably due to the eurythmics practice.



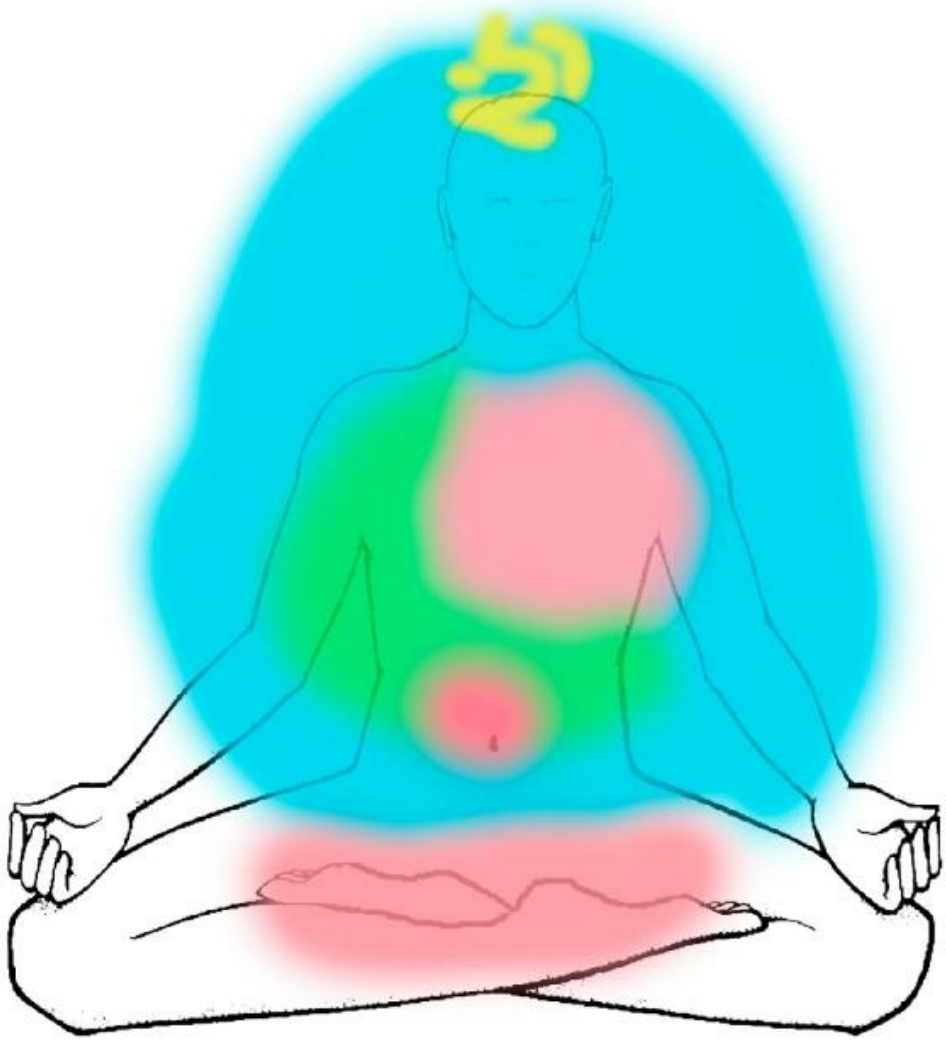
This ugly aura belongs to a frustrated and angry drunkard of extremely low spiritual development



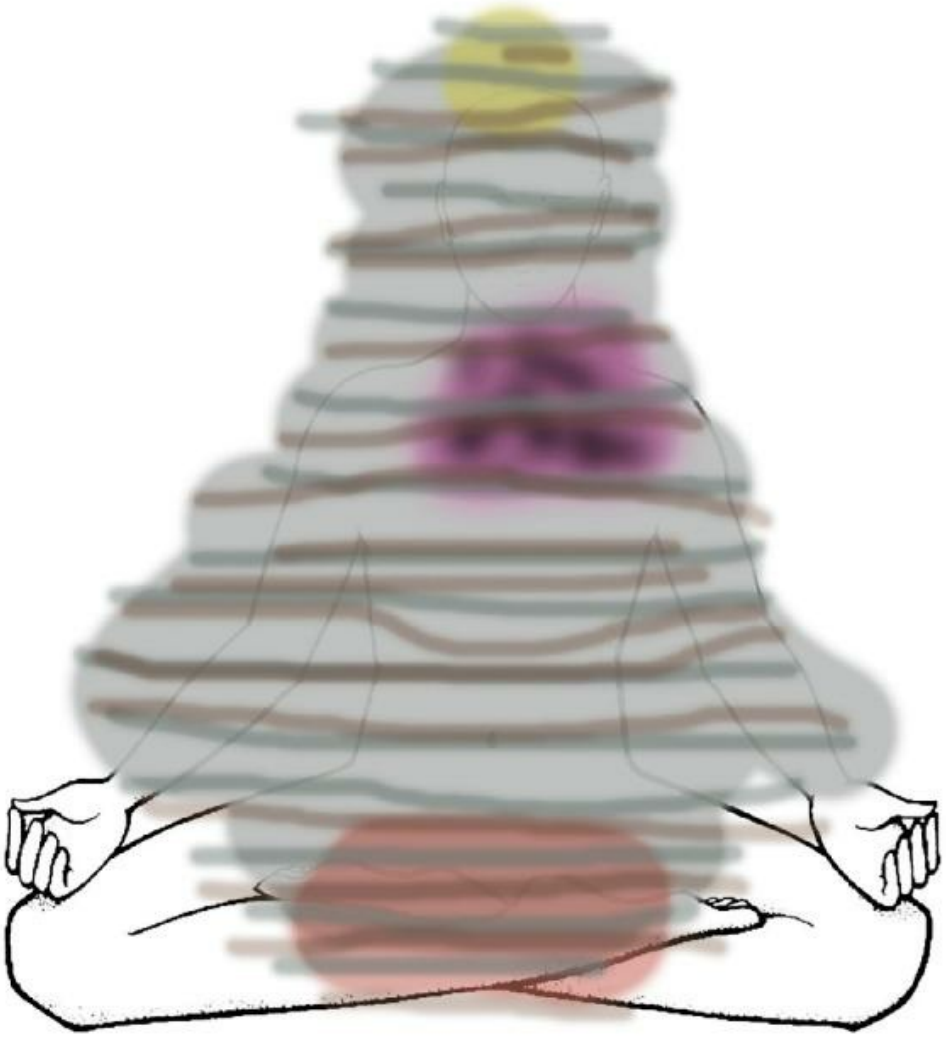
This is the aura of a very kind and caring person. The colors are pure and clean. The pink indicates the person is ruled by an unselfish heart. The light green indicates sympathy, again indicating the individual is ruled by a kind heart. The darker shade of green indicates adaptability. The pale brown-red at the bottom indicates sensuality but it is not a dominant quality, though it is stronger around the genitals. The crimson flash indicates the person can be irritable or moralistic when others do not live up to his or her expectations and ideals

This aura illustrates the average trance raver. Internal colors can be more or less bright and differ of course depending on the person. But in general, we find the intellect is shut off and there is enjoyment of the music and group experience as signified by the red and green. It is not very pure though, but compared to the auras many trance goers have before attending the group trance event it is a great improvement. Hence it is so popular. There is nothing spiritual about it, though. Many of them, especially the men, show an intense red in the genital area indicating they are there to enjoy the semi-naked women and hopefully get sex. Women at such events are normally simpler and have purer colors in their auras. The vertical ocher flashes are quite common and indicate the participants believe they are being mentally uplifted by the music, but it is only a flashing sensation. They are not. It also indicates a flashing of an inspiration that is not deep or lasting. Finally, they signify the trance raver is in his or her own world, even though at a huge group session. They shut others out and stay in their private space, dancing with themselves and energetically telling others to stay out of their space.

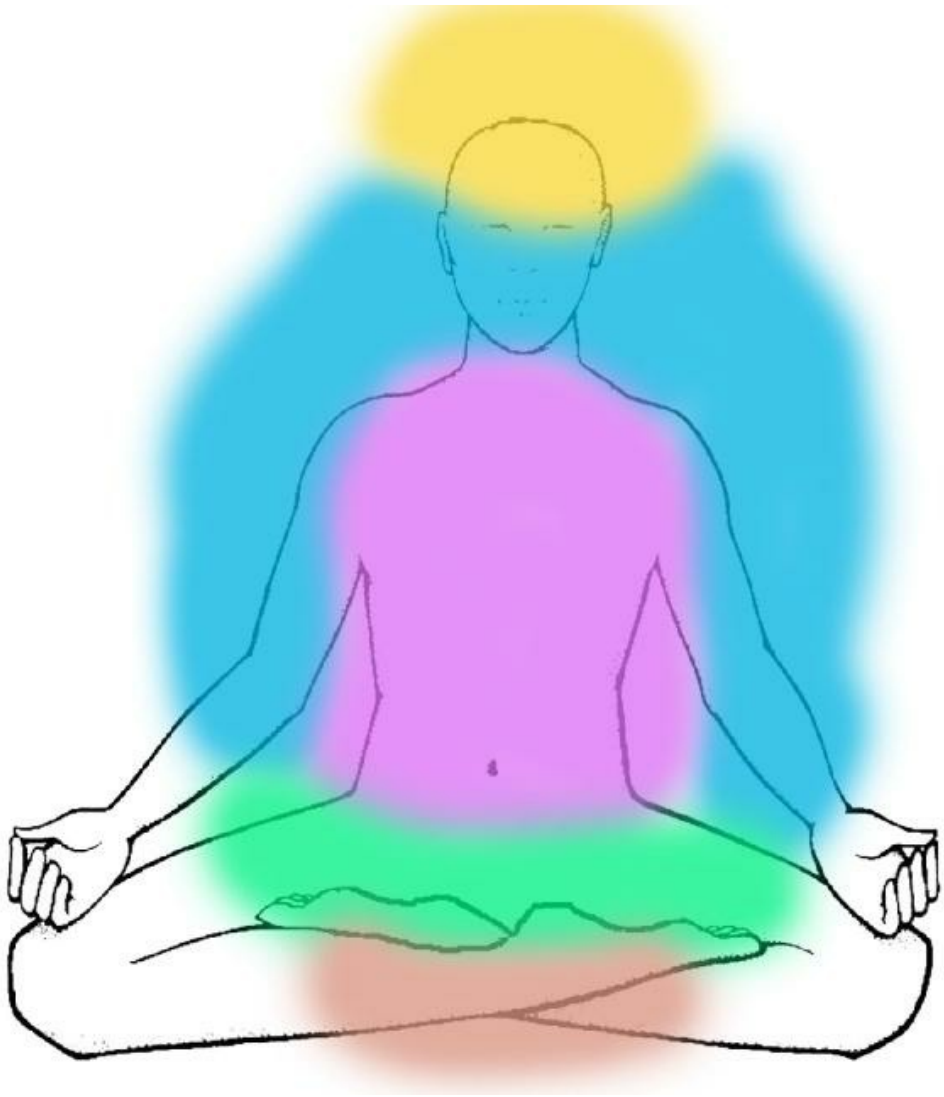
This is the aura of a greedy and selfish businessman. He is mainly dominated by an impure and selfish intellect; of which he is very proud. His affections are purely self-motivated and false. He will act as if he likes you if he can get something from you. Similarly, with his sense of harmony and social grace. His sexuality is gross and purely selfish. The little love he has goes to his family of which he feels he owns them and deserves them to be proud of him. There is little connection between his mind and his body. We note the utter absence of devotion.



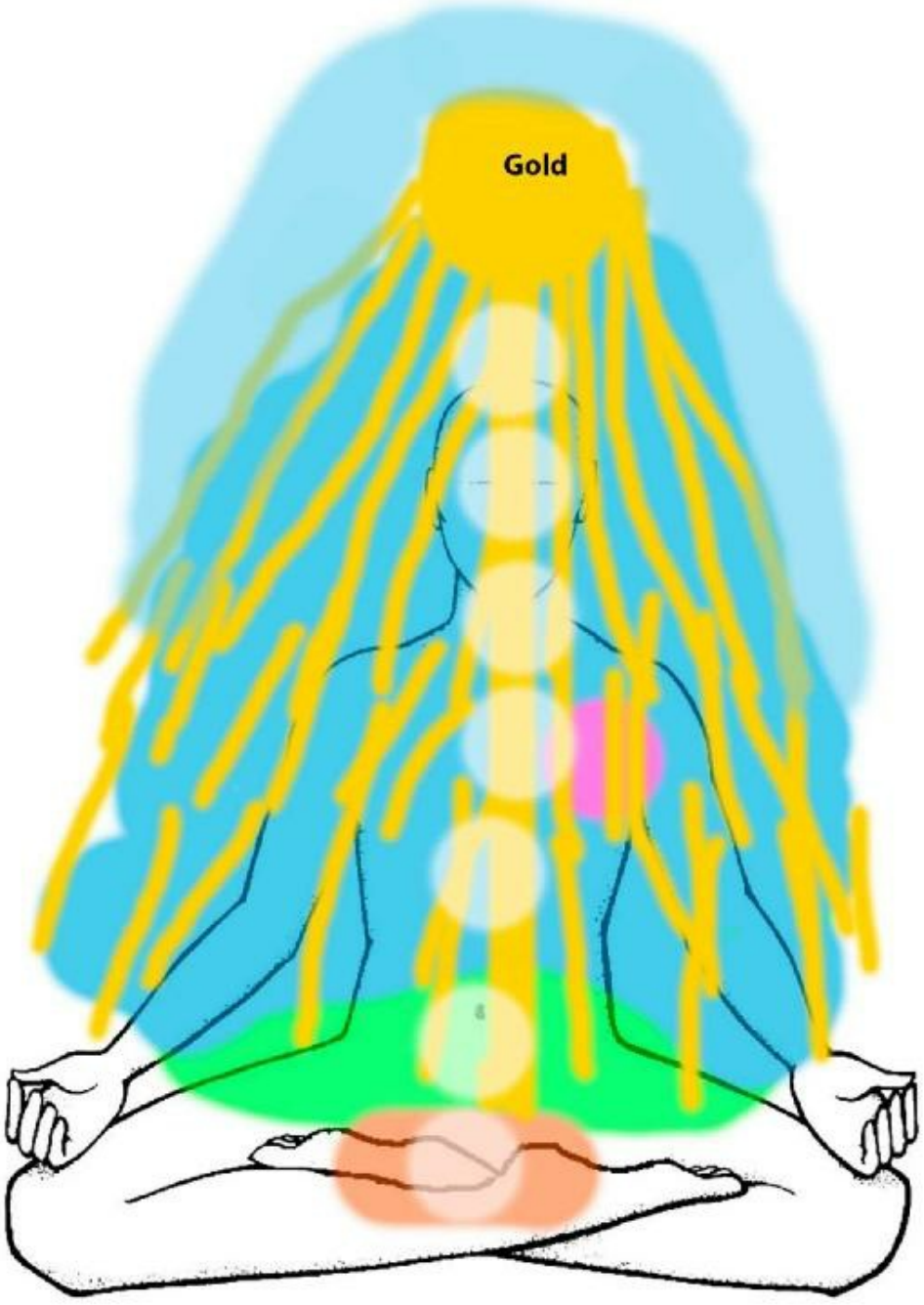
This depicts the aura of a devotee to god (a Hare Krisha nun actually, but not the hypocritical type). We see the blue of devotion has almost taken over. but there is still some pure and kind altruistic love to be found. The green indicates adaptability and a willingness to follow the order of sisterhood. Sexuality has largely been sublimated. There is some pure red at the solar plexus indicating ego spirituality and pride of being a nun. The mental faculties have much to be desired. They are confused and in a battle for no reason at all as if being intelligent is an impediment to being devotional.



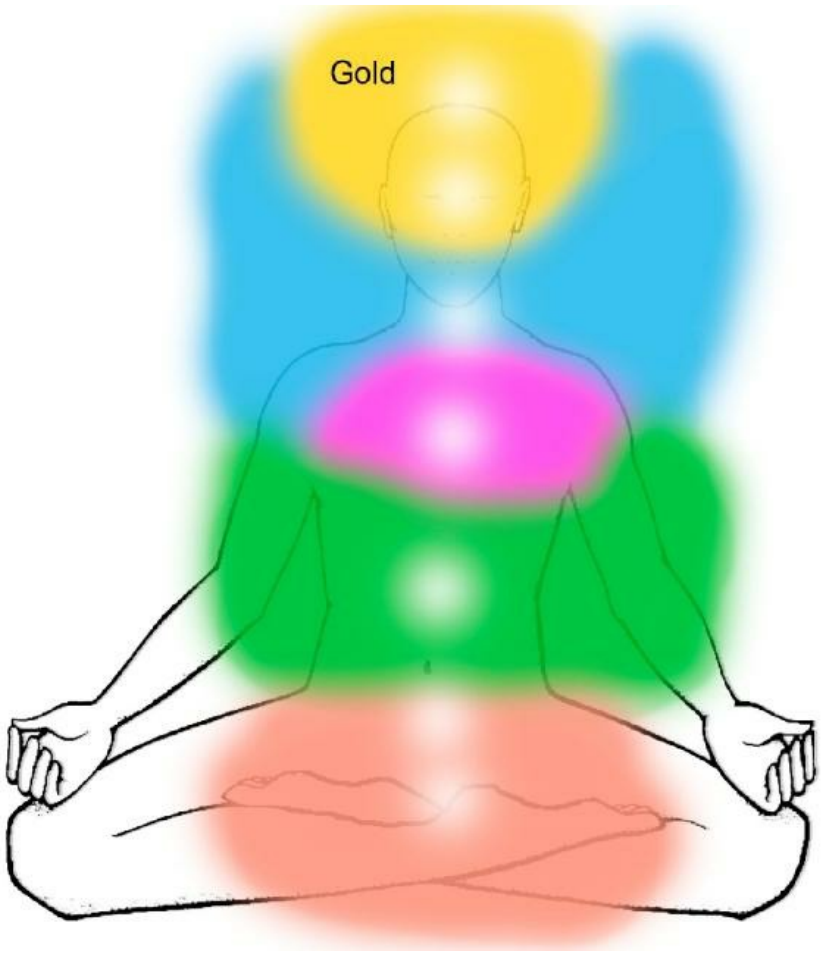
This depicts the aura of a severely depressed individual. It has lost most of its color except a bit of irrational thinking and selfish affection. The brown at the genitals show the individual gets some pleasure from masturbating. But it is muddy brown and self-centered; no love there, just a release of lust. The brownish and grey lines show the individual is self-centered and solely focused on his or her misery.



This is the aura of an ardent yogi. He has much devotion and a clear understanding of spiritual principles. But as seen from the dominant violet his spirituality is self-centered of the “I want enlightenment” type. This yogi has to develop his devotion and surrender more. Only by surrendering completely to God will God swallow you up and grant you enlightenment.



This is the aura of a proficient practitioner of the secret Tantric practice of Shaktipāt Siddha Yoga. As you see devotion to God has taken over, though there is still pure love of mankind and adaptability. The Brahmara chakra above the head has fully opened and is showering its golden grace onto the individual. He or she is close to merging into pure devotion to god.



This is the aura of a practitioner of the secret Tantric practice of Shaktipāt Siddha Yoga.

Astral life

The astral world looks much like ours since the astral matter is habituated to the physical form. But as the aura extends beyond the physical form, so it extends on the astral level. This means the form changes with the emotions of the individual, as do the colors. You can’t hide your emotions on the astral level, since they are immediately visible as changed forms and colors in the individual’s aura. Everything also has a certain translucency to it. Hence the term “astral” when we should in fact speak of the emotional level.

The astral body does not throw out or exchange vital particles like the etherical double does. Yet resonance between two individuals is much greater than when in a physical body. Whether incarnated or not one can shoot out astral projectiles either to help or harm others. If you are vibrating at a higher frequency, you can through sympathetic resonance cause the other person’s aura to vibrate at a higher level. The other person will feel greatly uplifted by this. This kind of sympathetic resonance does not cost much loss on the part of the giver. This differs from astral or etheric healing which uses the person’s own etheric or astral force to improve the other person’s condition. Many a person who has thus done their best to help or heal a depressed person knows how depressed they can get themselves. Depression is especially difficult to heal. The "patient" might feel good during the healing. But he or she is so habituated to sadness that the aura soon returns to the depressed state and they are back in the rut. So to speak eating up the force they got form the healer.

Teachers can visit their students when their students are in the astral body, meaning during sleep. The teacher visits the student during his or her sleep and imparts knowledge and shakti to him or her. Time zones do not matter. The teacher senses the student is at sleep and visits. Or the teacher emanates the teaching to be picked up by the student when he or she is asleep. Much teaching is imparted to the student this way and the teacher is hardly aware of it. This is because it happens on the causal level and is filtered down from the causal to the astral so the student may grasp it. Some teaching is given in the astral body though, as well as in the mental body. Rarely can a student pick up teachings on the causal level.

Just as we have etherical elementals, we have astral elementals. Often, they co-exist as one entity. The elementals are interesting since they have no life or will of their own. They pick up the will and intention of the astral entity that subconsciously or consciously moulded them. Such elementals can be good, neutral or evil depending on the level of consciousness of the emitter. They are usually attracted to elementals of like vibration. They are also attracted to other astral entities of similar vibration as the person who created them to begin with intended. This means that an evil elemental cannot harm you unless you have some of its vibration in you which will be reinforced. If you don't have any of that vibration or quality in you, the evil elemental bounces back to hurt its emitter.

The emitter of an astral entity can imbue it with a certain level of consciousness so that it acts like a living entity doing either good or bad. Or it can be a neutral entity getting attracted to entities it resonates with, with no good or harm done.

Such astral entities are much more potent than desire elementals previously described. The vibration and energy of an astral elemental is strong enough to create feelings and thoughts in the recipient. Thus, thoughts and feelings can be wordlessly transmitted on the astral plane. You pick them up more readily than the spoken word whether you like it or not. These astral forms can be very sharp and destructive. They may be of a deep red color and they will definitely harm the astral body of the target. On the other hand, they may be well defined cyan or pink and effect an uplifting of the recipient.

If someone hates you in this world and dies, they may continue harassing you in the astral world. Similarly, if someone loves you, they will keep sending you uplifting energy and support in times of crisis. Your problem is to not pick it up. That means you should not have similar negative emotions in your astral body. If you have forgiven the person completely the negative astral entity will just bounce back to the sender. If you haven't the energy will get absorbed and increase the negative emotion within you. Blessings sent, whether from a living or diseased, will certainly help the recipient whether living or diseased. The lesson from all this is we should learn to love and forgive. If not for others' sake, at least for our own.

Collective astral entities are a serious force to be reckoned with. A nation can

have a group identity or “soul” and anything foreign going against it will be met with antagonism if not hatred. This creates dramatic conflicts in our modern multi-cultural societies. Each culture comes with their own astral group-identities. Though people may verbally approve of the multiculturalism, the astral collective instigates conflicts from both sides.

Each individual creates his or her emotional-thought forms about certain subjects or matters. As such they are quite harmless. They float around on the astral plane and their matter eventually disperses and the forms dissolve. But if many people create similar emotional/thought forms they will be attracted to each other and pull similar astral matter to themselves. Thus, they will form a super-form of considerable intensity. Such super-forms can cause revolutions, social upheavals and certainly religious strife. On a smaller scale they influence people to do riots or criminal acts.

Fortunately, there are also good super-forms inspiring noble deeds and spiritual growth. There is a constant inflow from, or access to, the higher dimensions which is wonderful. Unfortunately, so few want to pick it up and meditate properly – if they meditate at all.

There is much negativity on the astral plane caused by humans and cultural conflicts during the past two millennia. When you become sensitive to the astral world a certain depression will set in because of it. This comes from being sensitive to the myriad of evil elementals and evil astral entities created through fear. This fear is largely created by the Zionists, the Christian church and Islam as well as the terror of wars. These astral super-elementals inspire more darkness in a hard to end cycle. Any religion that teaches fear of god (Judaism) or violence (Islam's jihad) or that you are a born sinner (Christianity) is inspired by dark forces.

Highly enlightened beings sometimes descend to the astral world to teach and aid their students. Here, if not possible on the mental plane, they may inspire the students with love, devotion and surrender. Very highly evolved teachers can awaken the kundalini of the student from the astral level as well as from the physical.

Love, devotion and surrender to God are the three most important things in life.

Everything else you leave behind. This goes not just for the astral level but for the mental and causal also. Love, devotion, surrender; let that fill your life. The more you develop these qualities, the more you will repel negative ones and attract positive ones. Actually, they belong to the causal body, but have their astral counterparts as well.

The more primitive the man, the less self-determined he or she is - or the less free will they have, you could say. The undeveloped person relies on stimuli to act. The developed man relies on his mind and ability to choose between emotional responses when reacting. Hence free-will will grow as you progress spiritually.

At sleep the astral body detaches itself from the physical body. In the unevolved man it hovers above the physical and has fantasies (dreams) of all sorts relating more or less to the life of the physical existence. At a more advanced level the astral body can travel in the astral world while the physical body sleeps. During these travels the individual can receive instructions and teachings from higher beings or beings at the same level that have some wisdom to impart. Maybe even from individuals at a lower level if they have some unique insight to share. Advanced students can get advanced instructions from high masters on the astral plane. They may or may not have some clear or vague memory of them when they awaken. Since the teaching was on the astral level, they will *feel* differently rather than *think* differently. At this point the student will be ready to have a feeling of continuity or awareness throughout sleep. It will not be full awareness or consciousness, but a vague sense of being aware during sleep that was absent at lower levels of development.

As man progresses, he interacts with more and more subtle astral levels and beings. That is when he really begins to get teachings from higher beings during sleep.

When a person dies and is released from the etherical body, he or she will spend some time on the astral level. Depending on their level of evolution, they will remain conscious as they advance from one astral level to a higher. An undeveloped man has a short conscious astral life on the level according to his evolution. Then falls into a sleep-like state and dreams nice and colorful astral dreams. Unless they have been evil during life, in which case they will go to a

lower astral level full of misery, suffering and pain. They will stay there until they have learnt the lesson not to inflict pain on others. A highly developed man will pass through the astral levels quickly and shed his astral body leaving him with the conscious mental body. The adept skips the astral level entirely.

Suiciders and victims of accidents or sudden death, like during war, may keep repeating and pondering the tragic event that took their life. Eventually they will fall into a sleep-like state and dream out the remaining time they had allotted to them on earth.

Suicides are a special case. They have deliberately denied themselves to go through the experiences their prārabdha karma (fate destined to be experienced in this lifetime) had mapped out for them. The prārabdha karma does not go away because you kill yourself. This means they will have to come back and go through the remaining karma. For this to function, they might have to repeat some of the old, already lived, karma to bring them into a state where they can experience the remaining prārabdha karma at full force. There is no easy way out. It may take hundreds of years before the right circumstances are available for this. Thus, they slow down their evolution considerably. You have to suffer what life brings you – or change your life which is a perfectly viable solution to changing prārabdha karma.

It is important to understand that a man is exactly the same person as before death once he or she is released from the etherical body and finds himself wholly in the astral world. Same virtues, same vices, same habits. Nothing changes, he just does not have a physical body anymore. There is no divine authority deciding if a man should go to heaven or hell. He finds himself in the appropriate astral level due to his astral body's vibrations. It is a law of attraction, not a law of judging and passing sentence.

When a man enters the astral world, he will find everything looks the same. This may confuse him and make him doubt he is actually dead. Especially in these times where it is a widespread notion that when you die, there is nothing. When these individuals with such a belief die they may not realize they are dead. For a period, everything looks like on earth and looks familiar. For a period, he may delude himself he is still alive. But when he tries to communicate with his friends, they are unresponsive and totally ignore him.

Though his home, furniture, etc. is the same as during earth life, he will gradually realize they are made out of rapidly vibrating matter, not solid matter as on earth. Gradually he will come to an understanding that he is dead and that there is life after death.

Astral levels

1.
People who commit suicide in order to escape punishment for a crime committed go to the lowest astral world. This is populated by the worst possible individuals, like murderers, rapists, fraudsters, brutes and so on. The "innocent" suicider may not belong there, per se but his act of suicide and self-violence has attracted him to this level. People who die prematurely, but die in peace, do not go to the nether worlds. They fall into a peaceful sleep-like state for the remainder of their earthly existence.

You would hope that a period of life in hell would burn up the evil passions, but they do not. Individuals here often come back to a new life just as vile as when they went. Some vague astral memory of the time in hell will seek to guide them to live better lives. But often temptations of crime and brutality are just too strong to resist for these individuals.

2.
The next highest astral level is the Muslim "heaven" with its utter fixation on sex and paedophilia. It is closely related to hell and does not offer higher insights or values.

3.
Above that level we have the general cultured human level. The astral bodies here resemble the physical ones. Here we have people with average interests in life and they will continue to live an average life in the astral world. If they desire nice furniture, it will be there. If they want to be together with their loved ones, they will be there if they have passed over, waiting for them.

On this level and up there will be sort of hospitals for the newly deceased. Here they will undergo healing and once again see their past life like a tapestry on a wall. They should contemplate their actions and their consequences,

4.
Then we have the "Summerland" of the spiritualists, which is the same as most peaceful and unselfish religion's heaven. This is where the nice and kind people

gather after death and enjoy a happy life in each other's company. But nothing much happens. They believe they have reached the end-all of human progress, so they are not open to teaching or spiritual growth. They have their astral image of the Christ and are happy being devoted to that. But it is not Christ, it is an astral construct made up of millions of devotees through thousands of years. It is the image of everything Christian devotees expected Christ to be, with grace, love, forgiveness, healing abilities and so on. Similarly, Hindus have a heaven at this astral level where they worship an astral construct of Krishna or Hanuman, and so on.

Here we also have the religious busybodies preaching and teaching their own faith. They find satisfaction in the astral world that their belief is true. Not realizing it is a fantasy. They build their astral churches and temples and preach their gibberish to anyone who will listen. This means religious strife is just as prevalent here as on earth. Only more so since it is put to the extreme. The lesson to be learnt here is religious and ideological tolerance. It seems that the various cultures have their own Summerlands. Christians theirs with everything of their faith confirmed. Buddhists theirs, Hindus theirs, Jews theirs, and so on. Where their borders overlap, however we have the religious crackpots arguing and preaching their individual "truths" - because that is what they want to do.

5.
At this level you begin to interact with spiritual teachers who instruct and teach you about spirituality. Here souls begin to advance spiritually under guidance of more evolved souls. Though progress is slow and self-centered. There is no longer the religious strife you will find on the fourth level. There is a greater sense of tolerance since for these inhabitants the various religions are (ideally) expressions of the same supreme truth.

6. & 7.
Here souls of high spiritual development interact with teachers and progress spiritually. At the sixth level you get over all religious sentiments and realize love, devotion and surrender are all that matter. The seventh is the real heaven of the astral worlds.

Theosophists describe these two levels as purely intellectual, but I beg to differ. Here we have pure emotional expression of love, devotion and surrender. The

theosophists seem to believe that the highest astral is somehow a gateway to the lower mental, but that is all wrong. You can have emotionally highly evolved (astral) beings who are poorly evolved mentally and vice versa.

As you can see from the following diagram, there is an element of egotism that permeates all the astral levels.

7	Intellectual people who philosophize not to help others but for their own gain. Also, people who have realized love, devotion and surrender for its own sake and not for personal gain.
6	Astral ties become less and less. In other words, people become less attached to their emotions. They are able to receive instructions from higher spiritual beings. They begin to realize love, devotion and surrender for their own sake, but still expect something in return.
5	People live in a world and fantasy cities. They do not possess the ability to create their own worlds, but live in cities and landscapes that others have built and which they then modify. Here live the unspiritual and egotistical religious people who have not acquired any spiritual insight but follow the religious fashion of their time. They form the world according to their idea of heaven.
4	People become more and more able to form their surroundings according to their thoughts. Earthly ties become less and less. Vaguely they begin to be able to receive instructions from higher beings.
3	Normal decent people. Wordily people. They usually hang around the places on earth that meant a lot to them.
2	Drunkards, erotomaniacs and addicts. Those who have violent desires and may possess

	incarnated people in order to satisfy their desires through them.
-	Earth level.
10	Hells. self-made darkness. No light. None of the things that in any way can be called beautiful or good.

Astral phenomena

Emotional thought forms

As the mental body develops, the elementals projected out from the astral body begin to get imbued with intelligence. We then have a thought form. You can have a purely mental thought form of course. But by far the largest part on this level are mixtures of astral and mental matter. Very few can perform pure mental thinking without any emotions attached to it. The scientist is ideally pictured as the unselfish idealistic researcher. The truth is he or she is researching partly for glory and honor. And if not career advancement, then maybe the Nobel prize.

Thought forms reach out to influence their surroundings. They seldom travel far since the senders are usually of weak mental capabilities. They also weaken considerably with the distance they have to travel.

We also call them thought forms when a strong emotion gathers elemental essence around itself to create a definite astral shape with a distinct purpose. They do not possess any, or at least much, intelligence from the mental level. But they have a specific intent and may or may not have the power to accomplish it for good, evil or neutral purposes.

A thought form proper would be a clean intent without any emotion attached to it. It will be more potent than the mixed astral/mental form. It is a pure idea as abstract as algebra or advanced semiotics. Such a thought form will rule the desire, not vice versa. Emotions attached to it serve to enforce the idea’s impact on the listener both mentally and emotionally.

We are now getting pretty complex desire elementals. The semi-conscious vital essence gets invigorated by the astral essence poured into it. It then gets a purpose or meaning from the mental matter poured into it. These elementals are constantly being poured forth from any human being. If you are not sharp, you might mistake the momentary elemental for the man’s basic energy – or your own.

Thought forms, the more energy they acquire, will float in front of a person's vision and color what they see. Thus, devout Christians see Christ, devout Hindus might see Krishna and so on. In common parlance: People see what they want to see.

Some of the thought forms may be helpful, others detrimental. This depends on their quality and the given individual who sends them out. A devout Krishna devotee will not get much benefit from a thought form full of a field of corn. Similarly, your average farmer will not get anything from a thought form of Krishna.

Thought forms can attach themselves to objects or places. A church where people have prayed in silence to the holy mother will have a strong thought form of compassion and healing which the devout will benefit from. The form of the Virgin Mary may even manifest itself visibly at such places. It is easy to mistake such a thought form for the actual spiritual being. Yet it could be the real Virgin Mary. It is hard to discern. And discerning does not matter much. The blessings from the astral-mental entity will be as powerful as blessing from Virgin Mary herself. This is because high spiritual beings often empower astral-mental elementals representing them.

Similarly, places of torture or mistreatment, like dungeons or torture chambers, may hold the terrible emotional/thought form of fear and sadness for hundreds of years. Ghosts of victims of murder may appear at crime scenes from time to time to the sensitive sight. But they are merely thought forms and nothing to be afraid of. Though their energy chills you to the bone.

Characters of famous books, like Shakespeare's King Lear for example, or St, Paul, exist as thought forms one may come into contact with when reading a given book. This will make you get a stronger impression of the story.

Once someone has sent out a thought form of, say, pure hatred, it is impossible to call it back. Hence repentance does not help the victim, only the source of the thought form. Once you have fired an arrow towards a target, you may regret it but the arrow will hit the target anyway. You may repent that also, but karma will come back to be repaid. Repentance will take the brunt off of the karma, but it will hit you back none than less.

Depression

The Theosophists teach that one should ward of depression. Otherwise it will hamper one's spiritual progress and cut the connections with the higher masters so they cannon teach or inspire one. This may be true for mild sadness. Modern science has shown us that severe depression is an organic dysfunction in the brain and not an emotional disorder. So, the idea of warding it off is nonsense. It's like having a broken arm: You can't "ward it off". First of all, it hurts like hell, secondly it has to be set physically. Likewise, with severe depression. It is a physical malfunction in the brain which hinders the astral body full access to manifest itself, hence the depression. It should be treated with medication not positive thinking, which will fail and only frustrate the patient.

Mindfulness

If a man or woman goes down the street or out shopping and is being very mindful from the start with a clear and empty mind, he or she will find himself or herself invaded by thoughts and emotions. Where do they come from? The mindful person will try to quiet his or her mind, but in actual fact the thoughts or feelings are coming from outside, from other people. They are not directed at him or her of course, they just hang in the air or in the wake of anyone walking randomly by. A person being habituated to a silent mind from practicing at home or in ashrams will be puzzled by this. There is nothing strange about it: If you are far away from a loudspeaker you hear nothing. If you put your ear into it you almost go deaf with the noise. So, to be mindful means to be mindful of this also.

Also remember that you only really pick up what you have in yourself already. But noise is noise no matter what. You might get a flash of anger or annoyance if someone is radiating that. To really pick it up, you have to have those emotions in yourself already. If the thought form has some strength in it, it will hang around until you are in the right mental mood to pick it up. Thus, you can suddenly become angry or sad for no reason.

On the other hand, living or dead may send you strong thought forms of upliftment in times of crisis.

Whatever emotions you are habituated to feel, you will attract on the astral level. This will make you more disposed to feel such thoughts more often and stronger. The astral world is full of emotions and thoughts of other people and we are literally walking around in a soup of foreign emotions. Whichever of these resonate with you will be attracted to you and those that don't will be repelled. You can be as mindful as you want or can, this is still a fact. Many of your emotions and thoughts are not yours.

Group energy phenomena

Group energy phenomena where a whole group of people are swayed by a teacher's energy are rarely what they seem. They are not necessarily evidence of the teacher's intense energy. They usually are astral entities playing with the participants. Or they are the same energy jumping from one to the next creating a wave like phenomena in the group. There is nothing spiritual about it, it is just astral energy playing with the group.

Likewise, some churches push their initiates over and they go into spasms. Or the preacher or the proselyte speak in tongues or otherwise behaves strangely. This is also just an astral phenomenon with no real spiritual value. This hysteria may spread to the audience who will also begin to speak in tongues or otherwise behave strangely. It is all due to astral entities playing with them and has no real spiritual value. It is a form of mass hysteria. The hysterics may vary from a group swaying rhythmically, to a congregation speaking in tongues and having spams. It is either mild astral energy or astral possession. In general, such events should be avoided since they open you up to astral energies that may not be beneficial at all. All forms of individualor group hysteria should be avoided no matter what name the teacher gives them. Often it is just mass suggestion. Agitation and overexcitement are detrimental to a calm, meditative mindset.

One of the "benefits", if you can call it that, of going to the cinema to watch a movie instead of watching it at home, is that you tune-in to, or are taken over by, the collective thought form following the progression of the movie characters and the plot. Thus, the experience makes a stronger impression on you.

Desire elementals

Desire elementals are not conscious beings with a soul, though they act semi-intelligently. They are a product of the combination of man's astral and etherical matter. During a man's life, and from the intensity of the desire, the elemental matter associated with it will separate from the larger pool of elemental matter. It then forms a part of a "being" with the astral essence, which we call a desire elemental.

Desire elementals try to pull the man down to the level of the desire that formed it and even to the elemental level. It could seem they are evil, but they have no intentions in either way. They just pull you in the direction they were formed. They try to manipulate the astral body of the creator and their victim into believing that sinking down to their level is a good thing.

Obviously, one should fight against the temptations of the desire elemental. One does that by not giving in to it and by cultivating higher vibrations through meditation and awareness throughout the day. Most people live in their impulses and will not be able to do this. Higher evolved humans who can consciously operate on the mental level should be able to do this with some ease. The lower mental is mixed with the higher astral anyway, so applying some mental operation when the desire elemental takes hold is not so difficult. It just takes training - and regular daily meditation helps this.

Sleep

During sleep the astral body hovers a meter or two above the sleeping physical body. The astral body does not need sleep. It is more that the physical body needs rest from the astral and higher bodies. In low individuals the astral body will remain hovering over the physical body in a dreamlike sate. He will rarely remember his dreams because he is rather unconscious. The evolved man will be able to move around on the astral level and meet other people and receive teachings and instructions. He will have some recollection of the night's events, but not necessarily fully or clearly. The astrally higher evolved will have some recollection of important events, but may still forget the garbage that the subconscious throws out into the dream world. Or he or she may mix the two together. Even the medium evolved will be active on the astral level and meet friends or foes, but will have no or little recollection of them in the morning.

Since the physical body during sleep is like an empty shell, it is vulnerable to invasion by astral entities. When this happens you normally feel a pressure in the physical body where they are trying to enter. That will wake you up and you can scare the entities away. Usually a certain feeling of terror is associated with such attempts at invasion. But any sane person of good health and vitality can easily shake them off.

Once free from the physical body in sleep, the person may travel great distances in a minimum of time. Teachers can come and teach their students this way or students may visit their teachers. They can also meet friends living in faraway countries.

There are many astral entities and one may during sleep meet any of them. Some are terrifying and cause nightmares. Some are friendly and want to heal you of wounds or sorrows. But most mind their own business and don't interfere with you. You can swiftly build various constructs out of astral material that will appear in your dreams as real. Even fantasy people. Passions and lusts can be satisfied or frustrated in a way that could not be satisfied or tolerated in the physical. With training and spiritual growth one can remain more conscious on the astral level. One can then dissolve such constructs or drive away evil entities through sheer willpower.

Obviously, any desire elemental will play havoc with the sleeper's astral body. Ill intentions will more readily return, as will good. Anything that has been going on in the individual emotionally will be felt much stronger on the astral level. This is the reason why Freud considered dreams to be the highway to the unconscious. He never understood the astral or other subtle dimensions.
One should understand that sleep life and waking life are similar. They only differ in that in the physical awareness the emotions are subdued and in the astral awareness the physical is subdued and the emotions run rampant. Interestingly, on the astral level we retain memory of the physical, while in the physical plane we tend to forget the astral experiences. Hence the difficulty of remembering dreams or at least dreams of importance. Usually it is the senseless chatter that filters through, that is remembered. Rarely do people remember dreams of instruction or interaction with higher beings. Thus, a man of some evolution may perform many good things and receive teachings and

inspirations during sleep of which he has no recollection when he wakes. Yet, the good things will remain as inspirations and vague ideas. While the bad will remain as uncanny sensations without explanation.

A person who has overcome a desire to smoke pot or hash may during dreams be influenced by entities who desire the experience and try to recreate in it in the person. Thus, he may wake up wanting to smoke or being repulsed by the ideas depending on his mind and the astral influence.

Another thing to understand is that the physical brain has its own dream world. Remains of the day play in the mind and create their own fabrications of dreams. This is the dream level that psychoanalysis generally reaches and is interested in unless it reaches the fantasies of the astral level. The brain dreams are often exaggerated and caricatured remnants of the daily life.

The etherical body also makes an impression on brain dreams. If one has been in the company of radiant people or vampires it will filter into the brain as fantasies. Any etherical “thought” that passes by an unconscious sleeper may be seized upon and integrated into the personal dream material.

Physical death

Physical death is like having a great meditation. There is nothing painful about it. On the contrary there is a sense of release. The etherical body detaches itself from the physical and it is highly individual how long one stays in the etherical body. It is rarely more than a couple of hours. Some leave it at once and go directly to the astral level, others hover about the physical corpse in the etherical body for a few hours or days. It is all a matter of attachment. Meaning how attached the individual was to the physical body and how much he identified himself with the sense of vitality inherent in the etherical body. Some cannot let go of the etherical body and they are the real ghosts wandering restless about in their semi-dead state.

At the moment of death man sees his whole life pass before him. He sees it objectively, exactly as it has been, what he has done to others and done to himself as well as what he has accomplished. He feels the pain and pleasure he has caused others. Thus, he or she understands the consequences of his or her actions. He or she realizes who he or she really is and has been.

After the etherical body dissipates the man finds himself in some astral level or other. Out of habit the astral body will look like the physical, though younger, since that is usually what people identify with.

The desire elementals which man has created during his life, and which fill most of his astral body, will try to pull the man down to grosser astral levels. They are by nature gross and release their energy as a downward pull.

Purgatory

Upon astral birth, after physical death, man can only see and feel what is grossest in him. He will often find himself surrounded by disgusting and vile creatures. Like attracts like. But as the desire elementals drop off, he will progress to higher levels according to his level of evolution. Many will even skip this phase if they have led good and peaceful lives.

As these tendencies drop off man will naturally progress and he gently slides from one astral level to the next. It is not like a death experience, it is more like one level phasing out and another becoming clearer.

Though man releases the desire elementals he is exactly what he was while alive. No wiser, not more spiritual, just the same. It is as if he has shed a coat and that makes no difference on him or his character.

At death most people find themselves in the same environments as when they died. If they were fond of a pair of chairs, the chairs will be there, or particular clothes, and so on. The things will seem real, but if the dead person had the sense to examine them closely, he or she would see that they are not made of physical matter, but of high vibration astral matter.

Similarly, his friends and acquaintances will be there. But he will find that though he speaks to them, they do not respond, or that a touch may penetrate their skin. Pets will be there and all sorts of beings. It all closely resembles the person’s physical life. For a while he may convince himself that he is dreaming. Eventually he will wake up to the fact that he is physically dead.

This space is called kāmaloka, or the world of desire. It is sort of an entry point to the astral levels described before and does not belong to any particular one of them. Theosophists say each level has its own kāmaloka, but I am not sure about that. I think you are in kāmaloka as long as it takes you to realize you are actually dead, then you proceed to your appropriate astral level. But the kāmaloka you are in is closely associated with the astral level you will go to. Maybe that is what the theosophists meant.

There are astral helpers, as well as deceased relatives, wanting to help, on this level as on all other. But people are generally as unwilling to take advice from the wiser as they were when physically incarnated.

Where do the astral worlds exist?

They exist in the same space as earth, but in different dimensions. Astral matter largely responds to gravity and the grosser it is, the closer it is bound to earth. Each succeeding astral level being larger than the preceding one. The two lowest astral ones actually exist below the crust of the earth, hence the myth that hell is underground. Astral matter is still course enough to respond to gravity. In the astral world they build imaginary cities and go on with their imaginary businesses and schemes. The lowest hell-world is made up much like any city on earth and the astral bodies resemble physical bodies.

The next three levels still somewhat resemble earth except the bodies are not in the least physical and do not have its needs. Its buildings are more in accord with the thought forms of the individuals.

The two highest levels are even further removed from earth and any resemblance with earth is less visible. They construct their buildings according to fancy. Or they add to structures built by earlier inhabitants, though they are palpable to others. They are, however, not solid and the inhabitants can walk through walls, or each other for that matter. Two inhabitants sharing the same space or sitting close to each other will experience a strong exchange of ideas and emotions. The inhabitants tend to be more self-absorbed. They may descend to the astral counterparts of the physical world. Here they may study books or comfort family or friends in need.

What kind of beings occupy the astral world?

First of all, the souls of the dead humans, more or less conscious. We call them “shades”. We also find the souls of dead animals. Suicide victims and victims of sudden death also reside here. The shade belongs to recently dead and some mental matter is still bound to it. Hence, they can have some rudimentary consciousness. We also find decaying astral corpses. We call them "shells". When a man moves on to a higher level and has withdrawn all mental mater from the astral body, the astral body it is left to decay and disintegrate.

Here we also find shells created by the living either consciously for protection or unconsciously. The creator’s consciousness may or may not inhabit the shell.

The living people float around in the astral world while sleeping in a more or less conscious state. So do animals. There are nature spirits and devas (divine beings) on the astral plane.
Some artificial creatures exist on the astral plane, they are elementals. They can be created consciously or unconsciously. Remember an elemental, or desire elemental, is a construct of astral matter embodying strong desire. For example, for drink or tobacco or other drugs.

We previously touched upon energy vampires, they reside in the astral world as well. Another, minor, class of vampire is the suicide victim and victim of sudden death. They will sometimes try to prolong their life by draining the vitality from the living.

Shells can be animated by elementals. Elementals are products of desire. They do not make a pleasant entity when animating a shell, since it will try to live out the desires through the shell.

Do humans reincarnate as animals?

Emphatically not! The animal nervous system is not developed enough to contain a human soul and its consciousness. Furthermore, animals, except some domesticated animals, belong to a group-soul that does not allow for a human to incarnate as an animal.

There are some special cases though where a human being refuses to admit he or she is dead. They live an empty life in the etherical body. They seek to replenish the etherical body by possessing others for a shorter or longer period of time. Such wretched souls may even possess animals. They then push aside the hold the newly individuated animal soul, or even the group soul, has over the animal. They will experience what the animal experiences through its senses. Hear with its ears, see with its eyes and so on. A soul who has thus possessed an animal can be said to have reincarnated as an animal, but it is strictly speaking not an incarnation. It is difficult for such a soul to free itself from the animal. It may take weeks of struggle or not happen until the animal dies. It usually takes a special bond between the man and the animal for such a possession to happen. Like if the man or woman has been overly attached to the animal or even had sex with it.

Once the soul leaves the animal body it will find itself in one of the lower astral worlds. Since it is accustomed to the animal form it will bear some resemblance to the animal it possessed. This will form his new physical body. He might even, if his animal desires are not satisfied, have a physical life where it is attached to an animal. This is different from possession sine he or she has no control over the animal but vicarious enjoys the animal's life. This could also be said to be a form of animal incarnation. But such cases are special and rare.

Astral life

In general, life on the astral level resembles life on the physical except you don't need food or sleep. Nor earn a living. You can do exactly what you want. If you were a musician during physical life you can continue being a musician. You can explore sounds and harmonies unavailable on the physical level. Similarly, with artists, craftsmen, scientists and researchers of all subjects. And what they learn here, they will take with them into the next incarnation. Some may be reborn as gifted children being able to play the piano and compose at the age of eight, for example.

On the astral level you not only find the dead, but also the living who are sleeping. Some dreams are not all experiences on the astral level though, but are products of the mind and the subconscious as described by Freud. During dreamless sleep people of low development are also asleep in the astral world. But at a certain level of spiritual evolution you can remain conscious during dreamless sleep. You can then work consciously with people on the astral level. Spiritual students can thus recall having realistic dreams where their master came and blessed them or taught them something about meditation and spirituality.

A spiritual master may be able to do more good on the astral level than on the physical. He can reach far more people and influence them on a deeper level than the physical mind can understand. Similarly, a philanthropist can do more good in a few years on the astral level than in a lifetime of physical incarnation.

Of course, one's behaviour on the astral level creates karma just as much as physical behaviour does. One can create much bad karma during the astral life as well as much good. If one devotes oneself to vigorous study of something, art or science or whatever, it will form the next incarnation as natural talents. If one is malicious and exists in the lower astral levels, he or she will most likely create a lot of bad karma to be lived out in the next physical incarnation.

Dead parents or grandparents sometimes assign to themselves the role of being guides to their children or grandchildren. However, they may try to impress their idea of what is right for their protégée rather than support him or her in his

or her own endeavours. Thus, innocently doing more harm than good. So don't just trust an astral inspiration as it is, examine it and decide for yourself. No matter what you do it is your karma anyway.

Free will

One does not lose the power of free will on the astral level. A man of initiative and drive will exhort these qualities on the astral plane as he did on the physical. A confused man of weak will and determination will be equally disorientated in his astral life as he was his physical life.

Upon death from the perspective of the living

Crying loudly and wailing does the deceased more harm than good. Crying in itself is harmless and natural, but a calm atmosphere should be kept. Prayers for the deceased is beneficial for everybody, whether living or dead. What should be avoided is a hysterical display of emotion and grief.

Upon death the soul should be left in peace so it can slip quietly into a semi-conscious state while releasing itself from the etherical body. Wailing over someone's death will only keep them awake and attached to the physical level. The astral plane is not so far from the earth that they do not influence each other. Strong grief or sorrowful emotions towards a deceased will call him closer to earth. Good wishes and prayers will set him or her free, and help him or her move on.

When the dead return

If some deceased soul has something important to say to someone, they may eventually visit the physical level briefly, but that is of their own volition and is rare. Other instances where a deceased returns to earth could be to help loved ones in distress or inspire creative individuals like artists, writers, or scientists with new intuitions and inspiration.

On the other hand, victims of murder or capital punishment may be so full of hate and revenge that they come back and inspire others to do the same evil deeds they got punished for.

Suicide

Suiciders do not tend to come back. They killed themselves to avoid the physical life. But the violent act does great harm. The act makes it difficult for the higher self to withdraw the lower principles. This means the suicider gets stuck in the lower astral world. There can be many reasons to commit suicide of course, and not all have the same dire results. Some kill themselves to escape punishment for a crime committed and then end in hell. Some are suffering from an incurable and terminal painful disease and simply want relief. If it really is incurable and not just the result of a broken heart or what not, it is excusable. But killing oneself because of a crisis in life is unforgivable. It makes it very difficult for the higher self to pull the lower, astral, man up. He will probably have to spend time in hell or at least in one of the lowest astral levels. Suicide bombers go straight to hell.

Suicide has negative karmic consequences that will be felt in the next life and maybe even more lifetimes. A life of depression is one such consequence. They will be tempted to commit suicide but have to learn to resist the urge and to lo live with the pain.

The state of mind at death

The state of mind one is in at the time of death also has consequences for which astral level the person will go to. Dying in a state of fear brings one considerably lower than dying in comfort and peace. People who are strongly attached to their material existence will, when they die, not be able to let go of their attachments. They will find themselves in a state where they cannot let go of their etherical existence. They live a pitiful existence. They cannot move on to the astral world and they cannot enjoy the physical, having no senses. They need to let go of their attachments and slip into the brief sleep that will let them pass on to the astral world. Eventually the etheric body wears out and they pass on anyway.

Moving towards astral death

In general, the length of time to be spent on any given astral plane depends on the amount of energy invested in it while physically incarnated. The man is only ready to move on up when that energy is used up. In the astral world a man truly becomes what he is. When he is ready to improve, he moves on, or falls into a coma once his astral energy is burnt up.

A physical life devoted to sensualism of course prolongs the time in the astral world. Especially if he or she ignored the intellectual parts of life, not to mention the spiritual. On the other hand, if a person has been devoted to intellectual pursuits, and has disregarded his or her animal nature, he will quickly pass through the astral worlds. Even more so if he or she has led a spiritual life being devoted to god. Now, dreams and fantasies count as part of one's life, so dreaming of being celibate or dreaming of sex is no good. It has to be the real thing. Dreams bind.

The way to purify oneself is through meditation. An expert meditator, who frequently bathes in Mother's bliss, will progress rapidly through the astral worlds. That does not mean he or she will pass through all of them. He or she might be attracted to one level or other and stay there for a while. Unless, of course, the individual is not spiritually developed enough to remain conscious at that level, in which case he will fall asleep and die astrally.

How long does it take to go through the astral levels? Evolved individuals may spend only minutes there, while gross individuals may spend a very long time, like a century or more. The Theosophists say on average people spend 20-30 years there, but I do not know about that. And, how did they? If one has purified oneself of attachments to all the astral levels, one will skip through all the astral levels in an instant. Such an individual will be attached only to god or the divine Mother or whatever form of the divine one pleases. But it will not be the form one is attached to, that is an astral level. It will be the blissful, love-beingness of god as experienced in real meditation.

Upon physical death one should realize that one is now in a process of disincarnating from his various bodies. This will speed up the passage through

the various astral and mental levels.

What slows it down is attachments and desires. As long as he or she is strongly attached to some physical pleasure, like sex, pot, tobacco or alcohol, there will be a slow progress through the astral levels. He or she will have to live out the duration of their addiction until they realize they cannot fulfil it in an astral way and finally give it up.

Also, ignorance plays a part. An individual completely unaware of these metaphysical states will have a harder time moving in them than someone who is well versed in them.

A particularly nasty fate can befall really evil people. The higher self may decide the incarnation is worthless and cut the silver thread connecting it to the individual leaving him or her soulless with his physical, astral and lower mental body intact. Such psychopathic brutes wander the earth with no morals at all doing evil. When their physical body dies they become the real spooks haunting people. Or they may move to the astral world and reincarnate as the evil brutes they are. Eventually their astral and etherical matter will wear itself out and return to the pool of such matter, then the individual truly dead.

Astral death

Just as the physical body is not the real man, so is the astral body not either. It dies and decays just like the physical body and returns its elements to the pool of astral matter. Many people cannot hold consciousness on a higher level and fall into a sleep-like state when they die astrally. Mentally developed individuals will, however, slip from the astral body to the mental body - just as people slip from the physical to the astral. Those who can will proceed to the mental level they are sufficiently developed to sustain consciousness in. If a man has little intelligence, he will think of himself as the astral body and will fall asleep when it dies. This can happen at any astral level.

To have a smooth journey through the astral world, one should understand that any object seen is not physically real. One should do one’s best to be noble and think noble thoughts. The time spent in the astral world is in effect a time of withdrawal of the ego to the causal body. A passage phase so to speak. It is a passage from the physical world, which exists as counterparts in the astral world, to a world of ideas. So, to aid the transition, man in the astral world should turn his back on the physical counterparts and focus on the mind. Of course, a person saturated with love, devotion and surrender to the divine will make a quick progress through the astral world. And through the mental as well for that matter. You can only develop such love, devotion and surrender through daily meditation.

As the astral body decomposes the individual either falls into sleep or moves onto the mental level. He or she takes all his or her good qualities along leaving the bad behind. The mental body cannot respond to evil emotions, so they have to be left behind. The small self is in a process of being withdrawn into the higher Self and gradually all evil and vile must be left behind. Seeds of these vile tendencies, however, will be carried along and form part of the karmic pool. Ordinarily, some of the mental body has become so entangled with the lower astral tendencies that they have to fall off with the astral matter. Similarly, talents and abilities of a lower nature will be left behind except for a seed added to the karmic pool.

The mental level

The various mental levels can be grouped into two. The lower uses language to think, the higher do not, they think in abstract concepts, which is very much faster.

The highly evolved astral beings, but poorly mentally developed, come to the first mental plane. Here they will be instructed in higher thinking without compromising their astral progress. This is a delicate process since the mental can so easily dry up the emotional. They learn to study and assimilate what has been read without compromising the emotions. It is much about putting emotions into words.

At the second and third level teaching is still imparted in language. It is still a matter of conceptualizing and understanding emotions mentally. More abstract concepts are introduced at this level, like at all other levels.

At the upper levels man learns to think non-verbally. In pure, silent concepts. Incarnated individuals who can do this are highly intelligent if not geniuses. Telepathy is being trained. At these levels telepathy is a natural way of communicating with others at the same level. There is simply an immediate share of an idea and a fairly quick response. Incarnated individuals who can do this on the mental level often find it frustrating that they can’t do it in the physical body. Developing the lower mental bodies is important to be able to translate the non-verbal concepts into language.

People functioning at this level develop their own language to express their ideas, like mathematics, quantum physics or chemistry does. Thus, they filter down their abstract insights into a language that can be taught to others who may not be on the same level of mental evolution.
At the lower levels thought still has form and gives rise to mental pictures or shapes. At the higher levels thought has no form. But as it manifests down through the lower mental and the astral levels to the physical brain it acquires some form, abstract as it may be.

At the higher levels there is no difference between thought and action. The thought manifests as a thought form with more or less power in it according to

the clarity and intensity of thought. It is immensely beautiful. It causes some frustration that it is impossible to describe in the language of the physical brain and senses. Mystics, yogis and artists who have experienced this level in its purity, or even reside there, are frustrated that it is impossible to convey.

Thought forms, just like astral forms, play an important part of life on the mental plane. But as undeveloped as mankind is, the thought forms are usually ill defined and weak. A clear and strong thinker will produce clear and strong thought forms. Individuals established at this level incarnate as teachers of mankind in some form of other. Whether it be as spiritual guides, scientists or artists.

The non-human beings that naturally inhabit the higher mental planes are known as angels or devas. They rule the elementals of the astral level and influence the physical from time to time.

Yogis reach this level in meditation and experience great freedom and joy. Some get established there and though they are not liberated (jivan muktis), they nevertheless live a life of extreme clarity filled with love, devotion and surrender.

A master living on the higher mental levels may impart knowledge directly to his students either in their waking or dream state. He can impart it astrally or through the physical brain telepathically. Or he may speak with his student directly while at the same time creating the right thought form in the student's mental body. Space is not an impediment to communication on the mental level. A master may teach a student living on the other side of the world and initiate him or her. The master may transmit energy or thought forms he or she receives from non-human beings.

Two human beings functioning on the higher mental plane can communicate non-verbally and instantaneously. They simply recognize each other's state. People of lower evolution can only see as far as they have progressed themselves and will not be able to recognize a master unless the master impresses his state on the mental body of the student.

But back to regular human beings. Few function well on the mental plane.

Those of high intelligence can operate at the first or second of the three higher levels. But it should be remembered that the mental level is not liberation and everything is seen through a veil of illusion, however refined it may be. Every soul has its own veil and sees everything through the color of that veil. The higher one progresses the thinner or clearer that veil becomes, but even at the highest mental level everything is seen through a veil.

It is important to understand that spiritual progress is not a matter of moving from one location to another higher location. All spiritual dimensions are located here and now in the same location as the physical body. It is a matter of rising in clarity so one can perceive what one already is.

Incarnation

The mental body is incarnated in mankind, though in animals it is in the process of incarnating. In an undeveloped man it is small and of weak colors. The higher one develops, the larger and brighter the mental body becomes. It is important to understand that the mental body is not the one who thinks. It is a mere vehicle for expressing the ideas of the thinker. The development of the thinker is mirrored in the mental body. The lower mental body responds to gross thoughts and simplistic understandings of the world. The more developed the thinker becomes, the more refined levels of the mental body become active and able to express the thinker's ideas.

At the highest level of development, the thinker will pour forth noble ideas into the world. Other minds will pick them up and see them as sudden flashes of inspiration. This pouring forth is typically done by a master who has not incarnated. But is still the case whether the master has incarnated into a physical body or not. It will just take some training and much meditation to learn how to filter the ideas through the physical brain and radiate them into the world. Or directly materialize them in the mental body of a student for that matter.

When man incarnates, he or she draws around himself or herself lower mental matter, then astral matter and finally physical matter. The individual draws to him or her what matches both his or her level of evolution as well as the lessons he or she has to learn in life. This is determined by his "prārabdha karma". This is the chunk of karma out of the great pool of karma one has stored (known as "sanchita karma") that one has agreed to live out in the given lifetime. This is how the lower mind ("manas") is formed. It is subtle mind ("buddhi") limited by the lower bodies.

Through meditation one can learn to function from the buddhic plane even while incarnated. Normally the lower bodies are too dense to respond to the higher mental vibrations. But through meditation they can be trained to respond to higher vibrations. Likewise, one can learn to bypass the lower bodies altogether. This is what advanced teachers do.

A man of lower development will have his mental body so interwoven with the astral that we speak of one psychic structure known as “kāma manas”, or desire mind. This kind of mind is also known as “manomayakosha”. It is the illusory covering made up of lower mind and emotions in one inseparable mixture.

Development of the mental body

In the undeveloped man the astral rules the mental, in other words the passions and desires rule the mind. The mind, however, passes judgement on the emotions and the stimulus that caused them. This is the first weak beginning of the development of the mental body. The mind figures out how to experience the pleasure again and avoid pain. In the beginning it develops as cunning, calculation and manipulation. But as the individual experiences these strategies on himself through karma, he begins to question their validity. He then develops the higher mental abilities and behavior strategies. Man then learns to resist many of the impulses from the astral body and slowly the mind learns to rule the impulses rather than serve them. All the experiences gathered during physical life are processed in the intermediate life.

In the average man the mental body has become strong enough to control the astral impulses in general. Yet he or she may still succumb to irrational behavior now and then. His or her mental body is developed in the lower levels of manas (lower, verbal, mind), but not yet in the higher. The more the mind is used, the more it grows and is purified. When a new thing is to be learned, the mind might oppose it because it is accustomed to vibrate in a certain way which the new material challenges and will change. This new vibration and mental material causes uncertainty and insecurity. Unless effort is made to overcome that, the mind may reject the new material altogether. However, as man learns more and more and finds the joy in succeeding mentally, the mental body steadily grows and is refined.

In the developed man the mental body has become so refined and strong that the astral vibrations no longer find any sympathetic vibrations in it. Man has become master of his emotions. That does not mean he represses them in any way, only that they do not control his thinking anymore. It also involves a purification of the astral body so it can respond to the higher vibrations of the mental body. In other words, he can to a high degree express his fine and subtle thinking through the emotions and the physical brain.

The thinker is beyond all this and exists at the formless level of the subtlest mental material. It is part, as a subtle seed, of that in man which reincarnates.

The thinker is not the Self, though it appears formless. It still manifests as an egg shaped being without any limitations in it when it reincarnates. The limitations arise as the new born consciousness descends down through the grosser mental levels and the seeds of prārabdha karma are activated. Soon the connection with the real Self is cut off by the unfolding tendencies. Real meditation reverses this process.

Currently the evolution of the thinker is the epitome of human evolution. All evolution of the thinker is gathered in the causal body, the real immortal body of man. The thinker resides in the highest of the unmanifest mental planes. It evolves relatively slowly. The causal body evolves even slower.

This unmanifest mental level, where the thinker resides, is the home of the ‘I’ feeling. The sense of ‘I’ filters down through the bodies and gives the man of the senses the impression that he is his physical body. It gives the intellectual man the sense that he is his mind. Only the advanced meditator has transcended the ‘I’ feeling and realized his existence at levels beyond that. Such a yogi will have memories of his past lives and knowledge of his mission in the present life. Yes, mission, for no one who has reached such a lofty height incarnates simply to enjoy life. He has something to give to the world.

At the highest mental level, we have pure reason. It consists of abstract thoughts and uses intuition to gain knowledge. As this function filters down to the lower mental levels we have intellect, reason, judgement, comparison and so on. However, the ‘I’ experiences the events occurring on the physical, astral and lower mental levels to be itself. This illusion has to be overcome by the meditator.

Thought vibrations and thought forms

When one thinks, it radiates from one as a vibration and a thought form. The atmosphere is filled with thought vibrations that pass undisturbed through each other. As it spreads away from its source it becomes weaker and weaker. If, on its journey, it strikes a mind adapted to that particular vibration it will set up a similar vibration in that person's mind. Thought vibrations can travel very far before they fade out and lose their ability to duplicate themselves in other people's minds. This is how collective consciousness is formed and where whole groups of people react strongly with some common intent. Each individual's thought-vibration intensifies the same ideas in the other members of the group.

The power the thought vibration has to duplicate itself depends on the clarity and intensity of the original thought. But in the average man the thought quickly reduces itself to an astral vibration and that is much weaker in effect. Thoughts from a mentally highly evolved individual stay on the mental plane and have a much stronger effect. When such high vibrations strike someone else's mind, it will only produce similar thoughts if the recipient is as mentally evolved. Otherwise it will help awaken higher mental faculties in the recipient to some degree.

The more morally good the thought, the better. If it be strong but malicious, it will bring other people down and pollute the atmosphere. As well as create bad karma for the thinker. Today the atmosphere is full of such thought vibrations.

When a strong thought is sent out its vibrations gathers mental elemental essence around it that corresponds to the vibration. This creates a thought form. It resembles an astral elemental form but is stronger, more lasting and has a greater effect on the recipients of it. The thought form has its own pseudo-life and pseudo-intelligence, though it only lives temporarily. Mental elemental essence surrounds us all the time. It responds all the more readily to stronger thoughts. Thus, humans create the largest number of thought forms out of this semi-intelligent essence. We are constantly bombarded with thought vibrations and thought forms. This causes our minds to be restless and jump from one issue to another. That is why there is more peace in the countryside than in a

big city. Such thought forms are sometimes called elementals, since they can seem to be individual living entities. The thought force being its soul, the elemental essence is body. Such elementals can grow in power if they encounter other thought vibrations that resonate with it. In other words, the more people think of something the stronger the collective elemental becomes. Thus, there is a strong Jesus elemental, a Krishna elemental and so on. These are usually what religious people encounter and which gives them a religious experience. They are not meeting god, but a collective elemental produced and enhanced over millennia.

Similarly, there are thought forms of characters from popular books that have survived the test if time. For example, there are thought forms of King Lear and other of Shakespeare's characters, and so on. Common fairy tales also have strong thought forms that keep their characters alive.

If a meditator is well versed in practicing love, devotion and surrender, his or her thought forms will be tinged with the levels above the mental (i.e. the buddhic). They will be a strong force of good and spiritual growth for the person as well as his or her surroundings.

If, on the other hand, the persons thoughts are tinged with desire or avarice, it will draw around it astral matter and do no good for anybody, quite the contrary. Unfortunately, today this is a common type of thought form.

There are basically three types of thought forms:

1. The vague unfocused thought form, which just leaves a sort of trail behind their creator. Such thought forms slowly disintegrate unless they find a compatible mind to enliven them.

2. The selfish thought form which is being constantly fed and follows the creator around. Today most people send out such thought forms all the time. They surround the persons mental body and perpetuate themselves by inspiring the person to similar thoughts. They may be good or bad goading the person along their paths to commit either crimes or good deeds. He or she sees the world through these thought forms and is to a certain degree controlled by them. The serious meditator must transcend this as soon as possible.

3. The projectile like thought form which shoots from its creator and aims at a definite objective, whether good or evil. Such a thought, if good and protective, may hang in the recipient's aura for a long time giving protection and comfort. If the thought is evil and of vile intent it will harm an individual who has similar qualities in his mental body. But if the recipient does not, the evil thought form will bounce back and harm the sender instead. The serious meditator must practice love, devotion and surrender. Once these qualities are established, he becomes immune to such vile thought forms.

Everybody produces thought vibrations and thought forms all the time. That is a fact that has to be accepted. The question is of which quality these should be. The serious meditator should strive to produce only positive thought forms, or at least neutral ones, and not to respond to negative ones even though he may feel overpowered to do so. This overpowering feeling only means he has similar vibrations in his mental body. They should be quenched through ignoring them. If he does respond in kind, he should learn to let go of it at once and not bear a grudge.

As can be gauged from the above, association with an advanced soul will be beneficial on many levels, both conscious and unconscious. The physical association is important since this is where the strongest transfer takes place. But a master may infuse an object and send it by mail and when the receiver wears it it is like being in the company of the master though somewhat weaker.

The mental body and the astral body are closely connected. The astral body functions as the bridge between the mental body and the physical brain. If the astral body becomes flooded with emotions, it may be near impossible for the mental body to express itself. This is seen when a person is deeply in love and all yellow at the crown of the aura disappears into a pink mass. Such a person does not think clearly but is in the grip of his emotions. The same can happen with any emotions, of course. This includes addictions. It is not that the astral body muddles the mental body. It is just that the physical brain is overpowered by the astral vibrations and cannot receive the impulses from the mental body.

Gross emotions have no effect on the mental body, just as gross thought has no effect on the causal body. It is true that a person may think of gross emotional

experiences, but the image of it is formed in astral matter, not in mental. For example, a man may think about some wrong done to him and it will make him angry, the anger expresses itself in the astral body. Such anger may then block any thought from entering the physical brain and all the man can “think” of is the wrong done to him.

Emotions may be mixed, some good mixed with some bad. The mental body will pick up the good ones and leave the bad ones on the astral level. Especially if the person wilfully decides not to be influenced by the bad emotions.

High and noble emotions such as love, devotion and surrender will inspire to noble thoughts in the mental body. Theosophists held it as a noble ideal that the astral body, hence the emotions, only expresses what the mental body contains. But love of god, devotion to god and surrender to god will filter up through all the bodies and will not be achievable by the mental body at all.
Man generally has to develop the mental body on his own. No outside influences can do that for him. He has to practice clear and logical thinking. Be analytic and be critical in a positive sense of the word. Listening to good orators and agitators may inspire the mental body to think alike. But it is still the man’s own volition that allows this to happen and he has to attune his mind to the thoughts of the agitator. But this only develops the mental body very little, it is merely a matter of resonance. To develop the mental body, the man has to learn to think for himself.

An idle mind does not grow much, if at all. Too many people today suffer from this. In fact, an idle mind is open to all sorts of ideas floating around and will usually just go with what is currently in vogue. This is stupid. The mind is currently one of the finest vehicles man has and he should take responsibility only to allow thoughts in it which are in accord with his higher self and which furthers his progress towards realizing it.

The yogi, or serious meditator, should understand that most of the thoughts that enters his mind are not his own and are of a lower vibration. He should train his mind to be strong enough to resist such outer influence and rely only on its own inner calling. When he is not using his mind, he should allow it to become silent rather than dash around with every other impulse.

Reading in itself does not develop the mental body, only reflection on the read does. That is why reading novels for mere entertainment does not develop the mind and can be considered a waste of time. Just like going to the movies. The astral body may get a thrill, but that is all. Not that that is without value in itself, but when talking about the development of the mental body it does not have much value.

Likewise, arguments are a waste of time. They seldom lead to any party changing their mind and at worst leave the persons involved open to all sorts of astral and mental influence. Arguments set up course vibrations in the mental body which attracts course mental material floating around on the mental level. Such may even, temporarily, lower the person's state of consciousness. Any state of vibration in the mental body will draw into it similar mental matter and thoughts which push out opposing matter. That is why one should guard one's thoughts carefully. If the mental body is trained to only vibrate with fine and lofty thoughts, it will quickly reject or shake off vibrations of a lower order.

Habits form in the mental body as in any other body. A mental body habituated to a certain vibration, either through the music listened to, the books read or whatever, may easily assimilate similar thoughts from the mental matter surrounding it. The mental body should be habituated to see the best in other people rather than their faults. If habituated to see the worst in others the mind will absorb similar qualities and bring itself down. It is usually held that will should be utilized to control the thoughts and emotions. But will should rather be used to control what enters the thoughts and emotions in the first place.

Various facts about the mental body

In an undeveloped man the mental body, or mental aura, is only a vague colorless blob. In the mentally developed man, the astral body and the mental body, or auras, resemble each other in color and shape. In the highly mentally developed man, the mental aura will be much larger than the astral body. It will shine in indescribable colors not even found on the astral level.

The next level of evolution is to transcend the ego that exists in the mental body and merge self-awareness into the higher self existing in the causal body. When that happens, you can remember past lives and you can consciously plan future lives.

One should learn to distinguish between impulse and intuition. To the untrained they may seem the same, but an impulse fades out while an intuition is persistent. The impulse arises in the astral body and is usually accompanied by excitement. Intuition comes from the higher self and is calm and impersonal in nature. If one waits a while before acting upon the inner urge, one can soon see if it were a mere astral excitement or a real intuition from the higher self. The intuition will grow stronger while the astral excitement will fade out. The astral excitement will be selfish somehow while the intuition is not.

Concentration and contemplation are the fastest means to develop the mental body. Concentration means fixating the mental awareness on a single object or thought. Contemplation means reflecting on the meaning of a specific thought or teaching. Theosophists call contemplation meditation, but that is incorrect. Meditation is to let one’s self-awareness merge into the higher self and even beyond that in the real Self of pure being. Concentration, contemplation and meditation should be practiced daily to have any effect. Practicing love, devotion and surrender to God combines all three. It is good to do it on one’s own, but if one joins a group of likeminded individuals it will have all the more beneficial effect on the surroundings.

The mind knows an object by forming a mental picture of it in mental matter, but it is not the object itself, it is only a projection of it. Thus, the thing in itself is impossible to know. Furthermore, the image produced in the mind is not a

true image of the object but is colored by the mind it is projected into.

Leaving the astral world behind: Devachan

Life on the regular mental plane is somewhat entangled in the astral. But at some point, one dies from the astral and awakens in a purely mental heaven world called Devachan by the theosophists. It derives its name from the Sanskrit Devasthān, meaning land of the gods. It takes considerable spiritual evolution to remain conscious on this level and not just stay asleep. It is a world of supreme bliss and beauty. There is no sorrow or evil here. It is not part of the mental world hitherto described, but is more like an autonomous world built up around the individual. Here he or she goes through his past life and assimilates what he has learnt. The intensity of the bliss experienced depends on the evolution of the soul. At any degree it is like nothing experienced before on any level. Certainly not on the earth level. Thus, it is impossible to describe. One has to experience it. This, on the earth level, is only possible through regular and proper meditation.

In Devachan only unselfish thoughts and feelings can persist or penetrate from the lower levels. Selfish thoughts and feelings would have been purged in the astral purgatory.

A shell surrounds the man in Devachan that enables him to sense and respond to only those influences which are within his ability to comprehend. His own thoughts and mental capabilities make up this shell. Its function is not to shut man out of the glory that surrounds him but to act as a filter to let only that in which he is capable of responding to. There are levels within Devachan. At the highest levels this shell does not exist anymore.

One may contact the higher selves of beloved ones and even experience them here in so far as they are pure in themselves. This means no enemies can disturb one here. One can experience deities to whom one has been devoted as living entities coming with blessings. It is important to understand that you do not meet the personality of the beloved one. That happens on the astral level. The pure soul may bear little resemblance to the personality. Yet one will recognize the person immediately. This is because his or her energy forms an image of himself or herself that corresponds to the viewer’s ideal image of him or her.

Unlike in the astral world where one goes from level to level, one jumps right to the appropriate level in the mental world.

In Devachan one contemplates what was good morally and mentally in the life just ended. The essence of this contemplation enters the causal body in a seed form that will be part of what forms the next life. The mental body itself will die and disintegrate so only the seed remains. If a man has studied something and practiced it most of his life, he will be born gifted in that area in the next life. It is as if he continues where he left off. Someone who has strived to be a good artist will be a better artist in his next life. Someone who has strived to be a great pianist will be a better one in the next life and so on. The causal body stores the memories of past lives and they are only accessible on that level. In Devachan every creative impulse materializes itself. For many this is a jumble. But for the trained artist or musician, etc., exquisite compositions may emerge. These talents will stay with him or her in the next life. They will be a gift, but also cause some frustration since the individual cannot reproduce them in physical matter.

If we consider that which endures to be more real than that which perishes, it is a fact the higher mental levels are more real than the physical and astral. Only on the astral level is life after death a dream world. On the higher mental levels the hard learned lessons become real facts. One has to integrate these into the immortal seed in the causal body.

It is important to understand that the higher mental planes, such as Devachan, are not only living realities at some point after death. We live and exist on those levels now, in every moment of our physical life, but it takes much meditation to realize that. This goes for all the subtle realms. They are strictly not something you move into. They are levels of existence that has always been there and which you come to experience clearly. The higher mental body has to incarnate fully for that to be a living reality.

When the Devachanic level incarnates, man lives in bliss indescribable. When the causal body incarnates man lives in even greater bliss. He or she has access to his past lives and often to the past lives of others. The individual knows his or her past and future and understands the path of evolution he or she has to

follow. The individual knows the essential lessons he or she has to learn in future lives. And the individual understands the karma that he or she has to live out, painful of pleasurable as it may be.

Karma still acts out on the Devachanic plane and determines the length of existence there. That is if one is even fortunate enough to remain conscious on that level. Karma on this level also determines the impulses that one develops or ignores. There is no pain on this level, so the distinction between good and bad karma falls away and there is only karma. It determines which seeds will remain dormant and which will develop into traits in a future life.

The theosophists have created a table illustrating how long any person of a given level of development will spend between incarnations. For example, they say the advanced person spends 1200 years between lives, while the unevolved only spends a few years. I disagree completely. Time passes differently on the subtle levels and an evolved person may reincarnate after only, say, ten earth years or maybe even less. In my own case there has only been a decade or two between lives the past 2000 years.

We must not forget that Devachan is still part of the mental world. Hence it is illusory. It is less illusory, though, than the lower worlds including the physical. The prerequisite for life in Devachan is unselfishness. It can be unselfish love for family or friends or even foes. Or it can be religious devotion as long as the devotion is unselfish and not of the begging kind. Being unselfish means one loves and acts without any thought of reward or return. Such unselfishness can only exist in Devachan and not in the astral world. If expressed in the physical world, it comes from the Devananic level. Devotion to god in any form may take one to Devachan as long as it is an outpouring of love and not greed and expectance of a reward. Any form of god will do, be it Christ, Krishna, the Divine Mother and so on. It is the purity and intensity of the devotional feeling that counts, not the chosen form.

Karma is still very much in effect on the subtle levels, including Devachan. This is because what the individual here radiates affects other people and beings. Anyone who has reached Devachan and continues to radiate love and devotion will generate “good” karma. While someone here who solely lives there for his own pleasure generates “bad” karma. In fact, there is neither good

nor bad karma, there is simply karma. We call it “good” if we like the result and “bad” if we don’t.

If one has a person in mind, one knew during physical life, and continues to shower him or her with affection, it will generate good karma. It will considerably help the recipient progress spiritually towards Devachan. At best it will inspire similar affection in the recipient. Of course, it depends on the level of development of the man in Devachan if he can create an accurate image of his or her friend. It also depends on the evolution of the recipient if he or she can pick up and respond to the energy being sent. Forming an image of a master or deity and pouring love and devotion towards it will be reciprocated many times by the deity or master and is of great benefit.

A general outpouring of affection and devotion will influence all he or she has been in contact with during earth life and uplift them. It will even affect devas and other non-physical beings positively and thus generate good karma.

If the recipient of the affection is still living on the physical plane he or she will probably not be aware of the influence on the mental level. Unless, of course, he has trained himself through meditation to be conscious on the mental level or Devachan.

The individual in Devachan who pours forth love does not lose any of his or her love or energy. On the contrary, he or she will be filled up from the causal level to an even higher degree.

It takes considerable training through meditation to be able to generate new thoughts and avenues of affection as well as directly control the mental body. The mental body on all levels is accustomed to respond to impulses from the astral and physical worlds. Just because one has cast off the astral and physical bodies it does not mean the mental body is free of old habits. It is therefore of vital importance that one trains the mind during earth life. One should train creative thinking and creative intelligence. Without such powers of creative thinking the mental body will be rather undeveloped and colorless. Someone who has mastered his or her mind and can use it creatively shows a colorful mental body.

The undeveloped man will live his life in Devachan in a shell of his or her own thoughts. He or she will be cut off from the rest of the mental world as well as the lower worlds. He or she will still experience bliss to the degree he or she is capable. The individual will be unconscious of his or her limitations and still be able to see mental images of his friends and foes on the earth plane. But the degree to which he or she can influence them will be limited. He or she can still receive inspiration from the causal body, though, even though he or she cannot receive inspiration from the lower bodies.

Everybody, except the lowly evolved individuals who fall into deep sleep when leaving the astral world, will have to have a period of life in Devachan. The exception being the highly evolved individuals who can access Devachan on the earth plane in meditation. They can skip the period in Devachan and reincarnate rapidly. After physical death they wait on the astral level for a suitable physical body to incarnate into. In general people need the Devachanic life so they can extract wisdom from their earthly experiences. Here they develop their aspirations into faculties they can enjoy in the next earth life. The yogi who can sustain consciousness on the Devachanic level does not need this.

There are several levels in the Devachanic world. The lower ones are concerned with selfish devotion to personalities, whether friends or deities. Mental matter dominates and it is the job of the inhabitant here to let consciousness and affection shine through the mental forms. The higher levels are concerned with devotion to the upliftment of humanity at large, either through spiritual knowledge, art, music, philosophy, science or simply selfless service. Here mental forms or matter are only present if they serve a purpose and the task is to flood them with consciousness and vitality.

Unlike the astral planes which have their own collective scenery, the mental planes do not. Each individual creates his own scenery. All sorts of beautiful sceneries exist there suffused with love and affection. And the higher the mental level, the more beautiful and vibrant, and the more full of celestial harmonies and unimaginable colors. An inhabitant of the mental plane can only perceive up to the limit of his or her spiritual development.

It takes much deep meditation to be able to function on the mental plane while physically embodied. It also requires a pure soul free of evil intent. Most of the

inhabitants in Devachan are disembodied souls. We also find animal group souls as well as individuated animals at the lowest mental level. In addition, there are the devas (angels) that belong to the Devachanic level. They are of many kinds: Some are here to help the living, some to help the dead, some simply for their own evolution, and so on. We also find artificial elementals. Evil people of high mental development cannot reach Devachan. But they will at most be able to function at the highest astral level that is intermingled with the lowest mental. We may find visitors from other planets and worlds here, who come to help and inspire mankind.

Death of the mental body

Once all the experiences of the astral life and the mental life have been processed and assimilated the soul withdraws into the causal body and all the experiences are stored there as a permanent nucleus. Once this is completed the mental body disintegrates along with the ego.

Reincarnation

When it is time to reincarnate, the higher self projects the mental unit or essence out of itself. This gathers mental matter around it which is in accord with its qualities and level of evolution. At first it is like a diffuse fog, but soon it takes shape of a proper mental body. This happens as the latent mental qualities awaken in the newly formed mental body. These are made up of past thought patterns, ideas, mental powers and so forth. These have nothing to do with past life memories or experiences. They are the essential lessons learnt through these experiences.

The same happens as the mental body descends to the astral level and gathers astral matter around it to form a new astral body.

Hence the man begins a new life exactly where he left off the last time he was incarnated. This largely forms his prārabdha karma (the karma to be lived out in the present incarnation), though he or she may also choose to take on more karma. There may be good and evil tendencies. Here the upbringing of the child bears a great responsibility if these are to blossom into full blown character traits or not. The energy vibration of the parents plays a great role in the forming of the infant's character traits. The higher self has but little control over the formation of the child's subtle bodies, once they have been projected out. Thus, it has little to say in the development of the character of the new individual. Here the influence of the parents plays a far greater role. Their behavior, thoughts and emotions impress themselves on the child. They determine which qualities should grow in the child and which should not. Inevitably, the individual will encounter evil in his or her life, but how he or she responds to such depends largely on the upbringing and latent tendencies.

The higher self, unless in an advanced individual, has little say over man's tendencies and behavior.

The Causal Body

The causal body is so called because it is the cause of the other, lower, bodies and their tendencies. The causal body stored the experiences of past lives and they determine the future life. This gathered experience makes up what is called “sanchita karma”. This is the huge amount of karma out of which only a portion determines a given incarnation. This portion is called “prārabdha karma”. The causal body contains the “I-ness” and has to be transcended for enlightenment to happen. This “I-ness” is the root ignorance.

The causal body evolves slowly since it can only gather into it what is pure and good. Also, it has to be filtered up to the unmanifest level of the mental body. Since most people function from their astral bodies and vaguely from the lower mental, the causal body does not get that much useful stimulation. Real meditation changes that and develops the causal body. See the end of the book on how to meditate.

The causal body is the immortal body that wanders from life to life. Very few can remain conscious in the causal body and go into a kind of sleep after the mental body dies. There may be a flash of consciousness where the man sees his past life and gets an intuition of the life that awaits him. Only after much successful meditation can a man remain conscious on the causal plane. Actually, at a very high level of evolution the causal body also vanishes, but that is beyond the scope of this book.

Normally the causal body is not incarnated, but exists in its own dimension floating above the physical body. Vague of color and size. With proper meditation the causal body incarnates and acquires the most beautiful luminous unearthly colors. When this happens, man lives in bliss. The colors correspond roughly to the colors of the astral body and the reader is referred to that chapter of this book. But the causal body displays colors unknown to the physical and astral senses and is glorious beyond description.

There are two levels of consciousness that are usually grouped together as the causal body. One is the bliss sheath “anandamayakosha”. The other is “buddhi”. Sometimes also the discriminating sheath “vijnanamayakosha”. To simply identify the causal body with vijnanamayakosha or buddhi is imperfect

as it is interwoven with the bliss body. Beyond this we have the Atman, the real Self of the man. But our present work does not deal with that. The causal body can only be called the higher mental in so far as it operates in unmanifest and abstract concepts that filter down into the mental body.

When the period of rest in the causal body is over and man is ready to reincarnate, the first thing that happens is that the causal body projects out a sense if I AM. Around this I AM gathers the appropriate mental, astral, etherical and physical material necessary to give the needed experiences for that incarnation. You then have I am this and that. The subtle bodies then build up a personality, an ego, around the I AM which the man identifies with. In the unevolved man this ego is made up of physical and astral material. Later mental material is added. And finally, through proper meditation, one discovers the real I AM and eventually transcend that also.

There are several hindrances for realizing the higher self. One is selfishness, which is a purely mental construct around which astral matters gathers. Both block the person's access to the causal level. The other is pride in mental abilities. One should always try to comprehend the pure I AM, then the pure I and then go beyond that.

Evil does not exist on the causal plane, but imperfections do. These imperfections may filter down through the bodies and manifest as undesirable qualities, but not as evil per se. These undesirable qualities may take the form of evil on the mental or astral world if misused. But they will never filter up to the causal body as such, only as lessons to be learnt.

On the physical plane man may do evil acts. This is only because the opposite good qualities are not yet developed in the causal body. By repeating evil acts until they become a habit repeated life after life, it becomes very difficult to develop the opposing good qualities in the causal body. This slows down progress considerably but does not affect the causal body at all in any negative way. Nor in a positive way for that matter. Once a good quality has developed in the causal body (the higher self), it becomes impossible to perform the corresponding evil. This lasts from life after life as it has become a permanent feature of the causal body. If a good quality is lacking in the causal body, it does not necessarily mean that its opposite evil will manifest in the life of the

individual. There is simply a blank space in the individual’s consciousness. There conscience has to rule. If one has developed a vice in the personality, the remedy is to develop the opposing good quality. This will filter up to the causal body and become integrated as a permanent trait that will show itself, if not in this life then in the next. It takes practice and willpower – and a highly developed conscience.

One of the problems of resisting evil actions is that so many people practice them. By contagion the individual, who has not developed the opposite quality in the higher self, picks them up and integrates them into his personality. This means they become part of the permanent astral and mental seed and will repeat themselves over and over again from life to life. That is, until the higher self in and as the causal body develops the opposite good quality.

The higher self cannot absorb the evil qualities, yet their repetition may dim the radiance of the opposite qualities in the causal body. Thus, retarding development seriously.

There is a constant thread between the higher self in the causal body and the ego. In the undeveloped man this is thin and there is very little communication between the causal body and the ego. But with proper meditation and natural evolution this thread becomes stronger. Eventually the causal body incarnates and the ego is a perfect expression of the higher self in the causal body.

One should live one’s life in accordance with what the higher self wants. This requires attention to life and to the inner intuition. You require crystal clear attention and focus to sense what the higher self wants. Remember the personality, the ego, is a projection of the higher self in the causal body. Otherwise one could be stuck in mental issues and dramas as well as astral ditto. Every bad action performed by the incarnated man blocks the threads connecting the subtle bodies, in particular to the causal body. It impedes one's evolution if one goes much against the will of the higher self, since only the lower bodies are guiding one.

On the other end of the scale we find genius where the higher self manages to send its wisdom down into the ego. This requires a still mind and a calmed astral body. But the higher self is not infallible. It can only express with

certainty what it knows. This means what it has acquired through experience.

We should remember about our fellow men that thy are composed of the subtle bodies and are evolving as best they can. This leads to true compassion.

As the higher self evolves the desire nature diminishes until it eventually goes away. Then the higher self can express itself freely and unencumbered by egoic desires.

Reincarnation

At the causal level it is not any astral or mental desire that drives a man to reincarnate. It is solely his own wish to experience more or live out karma or both. Thus, we can speak of subtle desires in the causal body. The real Self is not driven to reincarnate, but does so out of his own wish to experience certain things. Then, on the causal level, things are arranged to correlate with other souls that wish to experience the same and a group of souls reincarnate to share the experiences.

When the physical body dies the soul gathers its experiences into a nucleus that leaves the body through the top of the head and passes on to the astral body. Similarly, when the astral body dies and the mental body dies. The nuclei are assimilated by the causal body. When the individual wants to reincarnate again, the opposite procedure takes place. First a mental nucleus is projected out of the causal body, then an astral and finally an etherical-physical nucleus. Thus, he does not incarnate into ready-made mental and astral bodies, but the nuclei draw material around themselves so that new bodies are formed that correspond to the bodies he left upon death.

In an average person only a small portion of the causal body takes part in the physical incarnation. In the enlightened person the full causal body incarnates. In an average person the causal body only descends in part to the astral level. Such a man will live in his passions. Or a small part of the causal body may only descend to the mental level, and we then have the intellectual agnostic. If the person fully identifies with his passions or intellect a part of the causal body may be lost upon death. But the lessons learnt should far outweigh the loss.

If a person is particularly evil the thread that ties the higher mental body to the causal body may break. In such a rare case the incarnation has been wasted. Upon death the individual does not return to the causal level, but lives a life as an astral entity of such evil that we may call him a demon. He will want to possess living human beings and usually picks children because their soul tie with the body is still fragile. Or they may possess animals, especially if in their evil lifetime they have had sex with animals. This has probably given rise to the myth that a man may reincarnate as an animal if he lives a particularly debased

life. Human beings cannot reincarnate as animals due to the animals' less developed nervous systems. Such a person will reincarnate as a less evolved being than he used to be and will have to work his way up the rungs of the ladder once more.

Karma

Karma plays a huge role in forming the bodies and when and where a man reincarnates. There are three kinds of karma:

1) The huge pile of karma, residing on the causal level, of all man's deeds through his many lifetimes. This is known as sanchita karma and it is usually not a pretty sight because man in his early stages of evolution did many bad things.

2) Prārabdha karma which is the current chunk of karma taken from the sanchita karma that is to be lived out in the current lifetime. No matter how enlightened you get, you have to live out this karma. But with regular meditation you can lessen the effect of it.

3) Kriyaman karma: The karma created in the given lifetime which will give results either in that life or in some future life.

Good actions as well as bad actions create karma. If one performs good actions with the intent of harvesting something good in return it will produce karma. The man who wants to be free should perform all actions without attachment to their outcome and without any selfish thought or intent. He should perform his actions out of selfless service and out of love and devotion to the divine. This does not mean man does not reap any rewards of his good actions. They will partake in forming his higher self and developing the causal body in a positive way.

Suicide

Suicide is a disastrous way to avoid experiencing the karma one has laid out for that particular life. It not only postpones the living out of that karma, but it also creates new bad karma. Each individual incarnation is carefully planned and that takes a lot of work on the subtle levels. It is the individual's responsibility to live through whatever comes his way and gain the best from it.

Much humility can be learnt from suffering and that opportunity should not be wasted. The circumstances for working out the karma to be lived out in a particular life are carefully selected. It is strongly linked to the particular time and place the individual is born. Thus, the chance to work out that particular karma might not come again in a long time.

Man has a free will and he might have worked out the given karma sooner than expected. In that case more karma of the same quality may come to him. Or he might live a relatively peaceful life. It depends on many factors. His level of spiritual progress being one, and his ability to bear further burdens another.

Certain astrological configurations are needed to match the karma to be outlived in a certain incarnation. Committing suicide will seriously mess up that opportunity. A highly evolved man may transcend the horoscope. But its configurations and aspects will still exert a considerable effect. According to the horoscope the man may go through tough times that may inspire suicide. But he should realize that they are temporary and will pass.

Group souls

In its early evolution the causal body projects out a number of entities that collectively gather experience to the causal body. This could be a school of fish or a large number of insects or a group of horses or whatever animal lives in groups. Even non-social animals are part of a group soul. Think of the individual animals as cells in a larger organism, just like the human body has individual organs that collectively make up the body. This is to gather as much experience in the shortest possible amount of time. As the animals progress, they become able to individualize and reincarnate as humans. Insects, of course, do not individualize, only animals that are associated with humans do.

On the lower astral level, animals which are part of a group soul will appear as individual souls, but when following each animal up to the mental and causal level they merge into one being. As they progress towards individualization the astral individuality causes the mental body to divide into more and more individual entities. Eventually there is just one emotional and mental entity and individuation has been completed. Pets individualize faster than wild animals do due to the human influence. But it is in no way given that a pet will individualize. Animals that are ready to individualize come in group souls of up to about ten. Insects, which are not ready to individuate, come in the millions. Like a hive of ants, for example, where each ant can be considered a cell in the collective body of the hive.

There are several ways an animal can individuate. Through emotions, through intellect or through will.

Emotion. If the master is very affectionate his love may resonate in the animal's astral body causing it to individuate. It can also individuate through fear and we see this in the animal farms and slaughterhouses of today. Humans individuated through fear are cruel and sadistic.

Intellect. If the animal's master is predominately intellectual the animal may individuate through an effort to understand its master. We see this in animals who undergo training to respond to the master's commands.

Will. If the master is spiritual or wilful, the animal may use its will to understand its master through admiration and affection.
Thus, the master's development has a strong effect on how the animal individualizes. As well as on how the animal develops as a future human being.

The development of the causal body determines the number of individuals in the group soul. If an animal individuates from a group of five or ten it will have a well-formed causal body. If on the other hand it individuates from a group of, say, 100, it will have but an unclear and diffuse causal body.

The higher self

We have discussed the various bodies as if man is made up of three distinct bodies. In actual fact it is just the one higher self that projects a small portion of itself down through the various levels. In the process it builds up corresponding bodies around it, including the physical body. Hence man is one and one only. His job is to enhance the connection between the physical and the higher self in the causal body. Eventually he has to transcend the causal body and reach enlightenment. Very few today are ready for enlightenment, but the strengthening of the connection with the causal body is open to everyone. Especially if they meditate daily. In life we encounter people of all stages between these two extremes. Some total unaware of the higher self, some partly aware until we reach the rare pinnacle of the enlightened individual.

Ordinarily the higher self is unaware of whether the ego does good or bad deeds. From its high perspective it is all a jumble of confused thoughts and emotions anyway. Only when the physical life has ended and the man has risen to devachan can the higher self sort out the good from the bad. As man progresses spiritually, his higher self becomes more and more conscious on the mental, astral and physical plane. It can then discern good from bad even before the deed has been carried out. We should always remember that we are and have always been the higher self and not the ego or personality. Only later will one be able to transcend the higher self and become enlightened.

How do we know when an impulse to act is from the higher self or from the astral or mental body? Well, first of all nothing selfish can come from the higher self. Strong emotional upheavals, like at some church gatherings, usually come from the astral body since the higher self is calm and balanced. Such phenomena as talking in tongues and being physically agitated at a spiritual meeting can in fact be quite harmful and detrimental to spiritual progress. It opens one to lower astral entities to temporarily possess one. Furthermore, it trains the mind to be confused and muddled, which is the opposite of what we want.

If one is in doubt about where an inspiration comes from it is a good idea to sleep on it. An impulse will dissipate while a higher inspiration will persist.

Sometimes the higher self passes knowledge into the ego with utmost certainty. The reasons and logic behind the insight will probably remain unknown but the absolute certainty is unmistakable. It is then up to the person to work out the rationale behind the conviction. We could call this intuition. Most higher selves are undeveloped and may err in their intuitions and inspirations. It is then up to the individual to use his mind to judge whether the inspiration is good or flawed.

Madness has many forms. Some are caused by neural defects in the brain, others are caused by fixed ideas in the mental body that the higher self cannot penetrate. To this class we have the martyrs of yore or the fanatical preachers of some religion or philosophy which does not make much sense to any rational mind. Sometimes genius is a combination of a troubled physical brain combined with pure intuition from the higher self. Thus, some geniuses seem a bit mad. Sometimes they actually suffer from schizophrenia or minor psychotic episodes.

When high and lofty inspirations come down from the higher self, they have to pass through the mental and astral bodies. If these cannot respond to the high vibration, they will taint it with whatever material is dominant. If the mental body has delusions, the delusions will be enhanced and sent down with the inspiration. This creates a combination of genius and madness. Similarly, if the astral body is disturbed by strange and strong emotions, they will color the inspiration. This could result in another form of genius combined with madness. The combination may create nervous disorders. Hence it is important to keep the mental and astral bodies clean and well-functioning. Practicing love, devotion and surrender to god of one’s personal choice is a good way to cleanse the subtle bodies and bring down inspiration. One meaning of god is the Absolute Self if one perceives of god as formless. Practicing humility is also important. One should guard against pride in one’s spiritual achievements. A person may be a genius in one field but a mess in others. This means he has cleared a channel through the mental and astral bodies. But outside of that clear channel the subtle bodies are whirlpools of conflicting and confused material. He should strive to expand the clarity to the rest of the subtle bodies.

Beyond the causal body

There are levels above the causal: atma and the Absolute Self. They are not bodies so we will not deal with them in the present volume. The enlightened man brings the higher self up to atma. In fact, atma acts as the Self which projects the higher self into the causal body. In the enlightened man the higher self and the atma have merged. In mahasamadhi the causal body is withdrawn back into the Absolute Self and disappears.

How to meditate

Kundalini Kriya

First sit comfortably with the spine fairly erect and relax.

This meditation has three distinct parts (kriyas).

Part one

Feel the entire body. Sense an energy field in and surrounding the body. It normally extends between a half and a whole meter.

Follow your breath without interfering with it, expect maybe prolonging it slightly if it comes naturally.

On the inbreath sense the energy field becomes stronger and more intense and expands.
On the outbreath let go and merge with it.

Part two

Keep following your breath.

Sense an energy channel from the perineum up through the inside of the spine to the top of the head.

On the inbreath sense energy or a ball of light rise up this channel to the brain.

On the outbreath sense energy radiating from the brain in all directions

Part three

Here you do not follow your breath.
Sense you receive love or spiritual energy (shakti) from everything around you and at the same time radiate it to everything around you.

It is not as hard as it sounds. Think of it like this: You are in the company of your beloved. You sense you radiate energy to your partner and that the partner is radiating love to you – at the same time. Here we just practice feeling this with everything around us.

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Do it is long as you like.

You could do each step for ten minutes. Or do two rounds where each step takes five minutes.

If one step gives particularly good results do not leave just because the clock says time is up. Stay with it until the effect fades out.

You can download an app for circle training the chimes every five or ten minutes, or what ever you are comfortable with.

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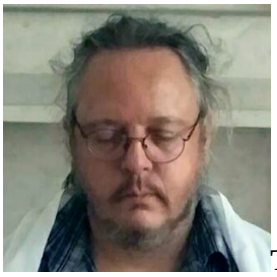
Please visit www.shaktipat.eu for a calendar of public shaktipat events.



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Other books by Jan Esmann

On spirituality:
Lovebliss – the Essence of self-realization
Enlightenment 101 – From Ignorance to Grace
Kundalini Tantra – Song of Liberation
Handbook for Shaktipat Siddha Yoga Initiates

On the materials and methods of the artist:
The Artist's Craft – A Handbook.

On art history:
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